

**OVER BLACK**

JOELLE (V.O.)  
You are what you love... what you  
fear... or what you hide from.

**EXT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - BASEBALL FIELD - DAY**

A galvanized chain-link fence, as tall as a prison wall,  
circles the immaculate school grounds and chalked ballfield.

POP!

A white blur SCREAMS into left field. Cheers. Shouts.

In street clothes, ten-year-old boys and girls scramble  
around a manicured baseball diamond. All of them actors.

The RUNNER rounds first base. Retreats.

Determined, XANDER (30) steps into the batter's box. Spits  
out his pink bubble gum. Digs in. An aged-out child actor.  
Cocky. Entitled. And desperately searching for a path back.

The pitcher, PIP (10) squeezes a baseball. She's mercilessly  
honest and a rising star in the worst talent agency in L.A.

PIP  
... But really it's a lie.

XANDER  
(snorts)  
It's called an audition tape.

To a young actress CHLOE (10) shooting with his phone...

XANDER  
Make sure you keep me in frame the  
whole time.

PIP  
Pathetic.

Pip fires in a fastball--

CRACK!

Xander goes yard.

In a vain attempt to keep the ball from flying over the  
fence, the CENTER FIELDER throws his glove in the air.

Xander jogs the bases like he's won the World Series.

PIP  
I Googled you, Xander Joe Harrison.

XANDER  
Yeah, and who are you again?

PIP  
(scoffs)  
A working actress.

Cuts a little too close to home for Xander.

PIP  
You haven't been in anything...  
since... in, like, forever--

XANDER  
Ha! I was the computer voice on  
Invasion of the Lizard People.

PIP  
What happened to you?

XANDER  
You know, for scale-and-a-half, I  
already know my backstory.

PIP  
That ain't even the pathetic part...

Both Xander's feet STOMP on home plate.

XANDER  
(to Chloe)  
I think we got it.

Collects his brand new iPhone.

XANDER  
My series ran for seven seasons,  
princess. What've you done?

PIP  
... You live here.

XANDER  
Don't even try doxing me, sister--  
Your parents signed a non-disclosure.

PIP  
Yeah, my agent told me all about you.

XANDER  
You have a terrible agent.

PIP  
I like my agent.

XANDER  
You're booked on a gig to play recess--  
You have a terrible agent.

PIP  
Well, you're a terrible actor.

XANDER  
Well, you're a terrible pitcher.

PIP  
I'm ten.

Xander strides away. Whirls one finger in the air.

XANDER  
Aaaaand, that's a wrap.

CHLOE  
You need us tomorrow?

XANDER  
Everyone but Google Girl.

PIP  
Pip. My name is Pip.

XANDER  
Unfortunately, I have a photographic  
memory, Pip. So there is literally no  
need for you to say your one-syllable,  
two-letter, three-character name  
twice. I'll actually never forget it.

PIP  
Pip McGregor.

XANDER  
And, uh, lock the gate behind you.

PIP  
But I can't leave--

Xander pauses. The children trailing him accordion to a stop.

PIP  
You booked me for the whole day so my  
mom won't know to come back.

XANDER  
Ever?

She shrugs.

XANDER  
Call her from the office.

PIP  
She don't have a phone.

XANDER  
Who in L.A. doesn't own a phone?

PIP  
Then people would, like, y'know, wanna  
call her and stuff.

XANDER  
Ah, your issues are genetic. Who wants  
to take Pip home with them?

No volunteers.

XANDER  
Abandoned in my time of need. Doesn't  
that have a familiar ring to it?  
(to Chloe)  
Et tu, Brutus?

Disinterested, the mob melts away.

Children text agents. Call parents.

PIP  
You're gonna love me.

XANDER  
Working full-time on me, right now.

PIP  
I am you. The fun-size version.

Without looking back, Xander heads to the school doors.

XANDER  
(relents)  
Oh, come on.

PIP  
Wait, that was way too easy.

The school bell RINGS.

She smirks. Starts after him.

PIP  
You can't be alone. Can you?

**INT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY**

Head on a swivel...

PIP

Wow, what kinda weirdo buys their old school and then decides to live there?

Xander, then Pip passes the...

**MAIN OFFICE**

... We stay with the cluttered desks inside. A "Go Bananas!" poster on the wall. A tableau untouched since the days when staff and students crowded the halls.

Pip creeps inside. Alone.

Steps to a closed door.

A brass key pokes from the lock. Catches light. A frosted glass window obscures what's inside. Thick, black letters spell out "COUNSELOR'S OFFICE."

Curious, she stretches for the door handle--

From seemingly nowhere, Xander steps in front of her.

XANDER

We don't go in there.

PIP

You don't go in there?

XANDER

Nobody goes in there, kiddo.

As Xander yanks her away, Pip squeezes out a guttural croak.

**INT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER**

Humongous monitors and plush creature comforts, the room is converted into more of a media center with rows of books, movies and music. Pip on a couch. Xander on a phone.

TIMPANI (V.O.)

No audition tape, no dice.

XANDER

Humph. What about the other thing?

TIMPANI (V.O.)

Without the other thing, the audition tape doesn't matter.

XANDER  
 (hand over the phone)  
 TV. On.

A dark monitor screen... remains dark.

Xander complains to the ceiling.

XANDER  
 Joelle?

Confused, Pip mouths "Are you talking to me?"

Shaking his head...

XANDER  
 My smart speaker has a mind of her own.

#### **INT. TIMPANI'S OFFICE - DAY**

Xander's agent, TIMPANI (65 - claims 35+) hangs on a phone.  
 Fake nails. Fake extensions. Fake boobs. Fake tan.

TIMPANI  
 (aside to an off-cam assistant)  
 Watch, he's gonna blow this again.

#### **INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION**

Xander streams his baseball footage on the monitor.

XANDER  
 The tape looks great, you know.

TIMPANI  
 I'm sure it does, darling. Now, here's the deal: if the producers think you look believable--

XANDER  
 I just told you I look great.

TIMPANI  
 ... And you do the other thing...  
 Xander, it's only the best script in Hollywood. And all you have to do is help them raise money from investors.

XANDER  
 Did Olivier shake a tin cup like an organ grinder's monkey? I think not. This town doesn't respect me because they don't think I'm a serious actor.

TIMPANI  
 (aside to an off-cam assistant)  
 He's doing the whole "I'm a serious actor" thing again.

XANDER  
 You know I'd kill for that role, but I won't belittle myself for investors--

TIMPANI  
 Xander.

XANDER  
 I won't do it. I'm not gonna pose for selfies or, or goss all night about Junior Detective...

PIP  
 (mocking impersonation)  
 --*Officer Skip Cooper, Junior Detective.*

XANDER  
 ... Or say it.

PIP  
 --Say what?

XANDER  
 --Quiet, you.

TIMPANI  
 But it's your catchphrase.

XANDER  
 Did Brando have a catchphrase?

PIP  
 --*I coulda been a contender.*

XANDER  
 Poitier?

PIP  
 --*They call me Mr. Tibbs.*

TIMPANI  
 (aside to an off-cam assistant)  
 He's totally boning us.

**INT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - NEXT DAY**

Xander pokes his head out of red velvet stage curtains.

XANDER  
It's a good-looking crowd.

An empty theater.

Scotch-taped to each seat, a current headshot of Xander.

# **BACKSTAGE**

Unruly boys duel with fake swords. Xander sits with a couple of CHILD ACTORS (10) at a tiny table with plastic chairs.

He chucks a flimsy knight's helmet at one kid.

Cap 'n' bells at another.

XANDER  
Thou shalt play-th Edgar. You, The  
Fool. And I shall play King Lear. A  
serious part for a serious actor.

Lowers a cardboard crown on his own head.

Chloe trundles in wearing a BANANAS mascot costume.

CHLOE  
This can't be right.

XANDER  
Show some school spirit, kid-- We're  
light on costumes. Goooo Bananas!

Pip enters stage left.

PIP  
Dibs on Cordelia.

XANDER  
Didn't I fire you, like, yesterday?

PIP  
I know but I already memorized the all  
lines.

CHLOE  
For Cordelia?

PIP  
For everyone.

XANDER  
Huh. More of a Goneril, me wagers.

Clutching a BANK BAG, Xander's best friend, TRICK (30) wedges through the children like he's being chased by Hell Hounds.

TRICK

Sorry. Pardon. Excuse me.

Devoid of basic common sense, Trick is a white boy who believes he's as hard as marbles. In reality, he's softer than his mother's white sandwich loaf straight from the oven.

TRICK

Xans, bruh, we all in some, like, serious shit. Ayo, little dudes! Y'all should back away from the windows, like now, yo. Hear?

In unison, every little bug-eyed face snaps to Xander.

XANDER

(calm)

Uh -- yeah. What're ya doing?

TRICK

Bruh, like this time... Xander, it wasn't my fault.

XANDER

No, I mean what are you doing?

Points at his e-cigarette.

XANDER

I thought you quit.

TRICK

Come on, now. Like, I did, see? But this is vaping so it don't count.

XANDER

Everyone! We're back in five.

## HALLWAY

Xander leads Trick across polished concrete floors to a vending machine. Selects a BAG OF CHIPS. Drops the bag on a CAFETERIA TRAY. Adds a CHOCOLATE MILK from a refrigerator.

TRICK

So, check it, yo. Remo-- You know Remo. Remo pulls me into this job--

XANDER

You're working, that's great, man.

TRICK

Respect, bruh. Means a lot -- though I digress. Now, Remo's contact sends the two of us out for a sit down.

(MORE)

TRICK (cont'd)  
 A sit down with a handful of peeps of  
 indeterminate moral standing -- though  
 they had repaid their debt ta society.  
 Now, I showed a skosh late.

XANDER  
 (disappointed)  
 Trick, you were late?

TRICK  
 Xans, it gets way worse.

XANDER  
 Please continue.

TRICK  
 I roll in and everyone was zeroed.

--From seemingly nowhere, Pip appears.

PIP  
 They were dead?

XANDER  
 Never mind her. They were dead?

TRICK  
 Oh, it gets way worse.

#### **PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE**

Xander leads them into a private office with expensive modern furniture and a view of the playground. He beelines to a cage with a hamster inside. Tears open the bag of chips.

PIP  
 That's what you feed him?

XANDER  
 You think I eat this crap?

Slips a chip into the cage.

XANDER  
 I call him Ted Danson.

Xander and Pip adore Ted Danson nibbling a salty chip.

TRICK  
 And so there was all, like, Remo, all  
 dead and shit. And all these bodies  
 dropped everywhere. And this...

Trick dumps a bag filled with strapped hundred-dollar bills and a flash drive on Xander's desk.

And now Trick has everyone's attention.

TRICK

I didn't know what ta do so I got up  
in here. I mean you, like, know all  
that detective shit from the show.

Pip explodes laughing.

TRICK

Someone f'real's coming for this bag.  
Remo's contact knows I was supposed to  
be in that meeting and, by now, knows  
I ain't under that pile of bodies.

XANDER

Bottom line this for us, Trick.

TRICK

We gotta figure out, like, who owns  
all this cash and give it back, 'fore  
they come rolling up on us and...

Makes a throat-slashing sign and squirty noises.

Pip stops laughing.

XANDER

And, uh, how's this my problem?

PIP

They might kill your friend.

XANDER

We don't know that.

PIP

That he's your friend or that they'll  
kill him?

TRICK

Oh, they'll definitely kill me.

PIP

(quoting from King Lear)  
Jesters do oft prove prophets.

XANDER

Aaaaand, back to me.

TRICK

I might have put yer name in my mouth.

A judgemental sigh cracks from Xander's chest.

TRICK

You right with a hell-a-lotta peoples  
in Hollywood, yo.

PIP

I hate rich-people shit.

XANDER

But I'm not a detective.

PIP

Thank you!

TRICK

Not true. Not true. Not true. You  
know, like, every last line of every  
episode, memorized forever and ever.  
And y'all gotta admit those scripts  
were the deuce.

XANDER

I was nominated for a People's Choice  
Award--

PIP

Which you lost to a talking hippo.

XANDER

So what's this all about? Fentanyl?  
Meth? Nose candy?

TRICK

Nah, nuthin' like that, bruh.

Shakes his head to rapid-fire questions.

XANDER

Murder? Human trafficking? Money  
laundering? Human trafficking?

TRICK

You said human trafficking twice.

XANDER

Because I'm really not down, unless,  
of course, it's this one. I would pay  
extra to overnight her in a freight  
container back to the upside-down.

Pip raises one eyebrow.

XANDER

Disorderly conduct? Shoplifting?  
Compulsive littering?

Trick keeps shaking his head.

XANDER  
Well then, how bad can it be?

# **INSIDE A DEEP METAL SINK**

Water rushes over blood-stained hands. Splatters inside the tub. Blood circles the drain.

Reveal...

# **INT. MEDICAL FACILITY - PRE-OP HALLWAY - DAY**

Chief Surgeon DR. HEATH GARRETT (45) jerks away from the sink. Shakes his hands with panache.

A TECH wrestles fresh blue nitrile gloves over his fingers.

A NURSE pins a cellphone to his ear. They trade frowns.

Sterile hands raised, Dr. Garrett marches to an operating room with the Nurse holding the phone to his ear -- tethered together for his many stops, starts and turns.

DR. GARRETT  
(annoyed)  
Yeah, but Pasha, my receptionist  
schedules appointments, not me.  
(contrite)  
Yes, Mister Pashvili. I understand.  
Any friend of yours... She can come  
down whenever she wants.  
(fearful)  
Yes, sir. Right away, sir.  
(angry at the nurse)  
Hang it up-- Hang up the phone.

Storms into the operating room.

# **INT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY**

Xander stuffs cash back into the bank bag.

XANDER  
(chuckles)  
Boob jobs and tummy tucks?

PIP  
Black market surgery is big business.

XANDER  
Which clinic?

TRICK

That was all, like, on a need-to-know,  
but their rates are crazy affordable.

XANDER

And Remo's contact?

TRICK

I only got a name: Sweet Lou.

Xander flips a YELLOW #2 PENCIL through his fingers.

XANDER

Hmm, okay, we need to find this Sweet  
Lou character. So, the first thing we  
do is investigate the crime scene.

TRICK

I dunno about all that.

XANDER

No, that's how every detective  
procedural starts.

TRICK

I can't go back there, Xans.

XANDER

Trick, we can't find Sweet Lou without  
clues. And crime scenes are where they  
keep the clues.

TRICK

But there's, like, blood and bodies--

XANDER

Trick, stop arguing. This is all very  
boilerplate, half-hour TV detective  
stuff: we investigate the crime scene,  
gather clues, interrogate someone...  
plot twists, dead ends and then we get  
the bad guys in some ironic way.

Like it's spring-loaded, Pip's hand shoots in the air.

XANDER

Oh! And somewhere, we get yelled at by  
an old, cantankerous police captain.  
(points with the pencil)  
Miss McGregor.

PIP

Don't tell me you're actually  
considering this.

XANDER

What? They're a bunch of Botox jockeys  
who got jumped by ex-cons.

PIP

But you ain't a detective.

XANDER

And that really annoys you?

PIP

(scoffs)

Sorta.

A devil-may-care smile twinkles across Xander's face.

TRICK

No risk it...

XANDER

... No biscuit.

The two high-five.

XANDER

(meaning the quote)

It's from the show.

PIP

Why do you hate me?

XANDER

I don't hate you.

PIP

Uh-huh.

XANDER

Nuh-uh.

Trick covers his eyes. Shakes his head.

PIP

Whatever. I'm more worried you two  
brainiacs are about to hand over that  
whole wheel of cheese to some muggle  
you don't even know. Sweet Lou isn't  
Mr. Big. We need to find Mr. Big.

XANDER

She's not, not wrong.

TRICK

Hey, how'd the audition tape go?

XANDER

Oh, it was awesome, of course.

PIP

--And, guys...

XANDER

The part's as good as mine.

TRICK

I see you, man.

PIP

--Adults in the room...

Frustrated, Pip tugs at every corner of the bank bag.

TRICK

But no clowning, this role... You need to post up and go hard in the paint to pull this shit off, bruh. Balling out, Oscar hard. You feel me?

XANDER

But me helping you with this situation -- can in no way -- jeopardize my role in the movie.

TRICK

One-hundred percent.

Pip discovers a secret compartment with a TRACKING DEVICE inside. HAMMERS it to pieces with the cafeteria tray.

PIP

Have you two ever, like, read any script ever? There's always a tracker thingie with the money.

Amazed, they stare at Pip.

PIP

What? My mom ain't coming back for hours and you dumdums are gonna need all the help ya can get, really.

XANDER

(back to Trick)

Wow, you really think I'm a good actor?

TRICK

Those were some great scripts.

XANDER  
And I'm a good actor.

TRICK  
Those were some really great scripts.

Not the answer he was looking for.

XANDER  
Dismiss the kids. I'll stash the bag.  
And we'll start our investigation.

Flings the pencil in the air--

STABS a recessed ceiling tile alongside other pencils.

Trick and Pip skid around the corner as they rush out.

XANDER  
And do not run in the halls!

JOELLE, the smart speaker, lamps to life. Pink. Sounds like Glinda, the Good Witch of the North from The Wizard of Oz.

JOELLE  
Oh, look at the ego on this one.

XANDER  
There you are, finally.

JOELLE  
And you do realize you are not a detective.

XANDER  
Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Joelle, off.

JOELLE  
... But quite an imagination.

#### **HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

Mounted to the wall, a PUBLIC ADDRESS SPEAKER vibrates.

JOELLE  
Gold star for effort, dear.

A long row of lockers.

Xander stashes the bank bag inside of one.

JOELLE  
But how are you and your merry band of fourth graders going to locate Sweet Lou?

XANDER

Obviously, we follow the clues.

Pockets the flash drive.

Spins the combination on the lock.

JOELLE

And you really think Sweet Lou is just going to give up Mr. Big?

XANDER

You know what? Joelle, off.

#### **MAIN OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER**

On a BANK OF BLACK & WHITE MONITORS behind the RECEPTIONIST'S DESK, we watch Xander, Trick and Pip all leave together.

#### **INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - MOTHER WOLF - DAY**

Small plates. Fine cuisine. Impeccable presentation.

A hired killer from Brazil named RIO (30) sits before an empty plate. His bespoke suit masks massive insecurities.

The other two at the table feast: A diminutive Georgian mob boss, Koka "PASHA" Pashvili (60) and his muscle-bound associate SWEET LOU (40). Pasha waves his fork. Pontificates.

PASHA

(slight Slavic accent)

See, your peoples, they no have the sophisticated palette. This is not your fault. It's breeding. Genetics. I no expect this from a person in your standing.

A chuckle burps outta Sweet Lou.

PASHA

You forget all this now. We have problem. My associate here, he has a lot of money go missing earlier today.

RIO

(slight Latin accent)

I know this was not his fault, either.

Sweet Lou's eyes go dead. He sets down his fork.

PASHA

Enough. Rio, after you eliminate my problem, find Sweet Lou's money and eliminate his problem, or problems. He represents close personal friends of mine. Friends I no want distracted with this money nonsense.

Dropping his napkin on the empty plate, Rio rises.

PASHA

And Rio, I mean no disrespect earlier.

Graciously, Rio nods.

SWEET LOU

Ya know, I saw dis here documentary the other night. Is it true, you Brazilians eat your dead ancestors?

Pasha and Sweet Lou snicker.

Rio glares, donning his best "fuck you" smile.

#### **INT. WALDORF ASTORIA - HOTEL SUITE - LATER**

Wearing a crepe sheath dress and pearls, an EXECUTIVE (50) cowers on her knees. Hands behind her head.

In a BELLBOY UNIFORM, Rio points a suppressed WALTHER PPK at her head.

RIO

We know why I'm here.

EXECUTIVE

(a shake in her voice)  
To, ah, work something out?

RIO

Oh, that time, she is gone bye-bye.

EXECUTIVE

I. I-I have money.

RIO

No, you have the wrong people's money.  
This is not your money to give to me.

A single place setting at the table. Meat. Greens. Sauce.

RIO

(smells it)  
Hmmm. Pork tenderloin?

EXECUTIVE  
What?

RIO  
Lunch?

EXECUTIVE  
Yeah, I guess so.

RIO  
May I?

EXECUTIVE  
Please.

Never lowering the pistol, Rio stabs a medallion of meat.  
Chews. Savors the flavor.

RIO  
Oh, this is very good. But the words,  
they are wrong in my mouth. I don't  
know how you say... And did you try  
the honey garlic sauce? It was on the  
side.

EXECUTIVE  
(annoyed)  
Yes, I tried the sauce.

Rio grunts.

She tenses.

EXECUTIVE  
Sorry.

RIO  
Some think to eat the best meals, it  
is status. Shows they are high class--  
Better than others.

EXECUTIVE  
I never implied... It's just lunch.

RIO  
I must know everything about the best  
meals. It will be how I do this thing.

Rio sits. Lowers the gun on the table, but it never leaves  
his hand. Still pointed at her head.

She glances back over her shoulder. Spots a seam.

EXECUTIVE

I'm-uh. I'm very good with sauces. I  
could show you how to make it.

He lifts another bite.

EXECUTIVE (V.O.)

I could show you how to--

Click..... Thud.

Slowly, Rio chews.

RIO

Extraordinary. This is the word.

# **INT. DERELICT RENDERING PLANT - DAY**

A stained and sticky floor makes wet noises as Trick leads Xander and Pip past heavy industrial machinery. No workers. No activity. No bodies.

XANDER

... And nobody touch anything-- It  
could be a clue.

PIP

Gross alert. I'm trying not to touch  
everything in here.

XANDER

From the look of things, no one's been  
here in years. Trick, I thought this  
was a crime scene?

Trick stops. Befuddled.

TRICK

It was.

XANDER

Well then, where are all the bodies?  
And blood and carnage?

PIP

And what's that smell?

TRICK

This be a rendering plant, kid.

XANDER

How am I supposed to conduct a proper  
investigation of a crime scene without  
a proper crime scene?

TRICK  
A... rendering plant.

PIP  
What's that mean?

XANDER  
Trick, you didn't...

TRICK  
No way, bro. The second I, like,  
clocked that shit, I bounced.

PIP  
And what in dear God is that smell?!

XANDER  
A rendering plant is where they  
process road kill.

PIP  
Aw, those poor little animals.

Then it hits her...

PIP  
Eeeeew. You don't think they dumped  
the bodies in the--

Nods to the intake shaft.

PIP  
That's what I'd do.

XANDER  
Well, we're not all sociopaths.

PIP  
And hey, have we seriously discussed  
maybe just keepin' the money?

XANDER  
Are you trying to get me killed?

TRICK  
(spinning out)  
If the bodies are gone, that means  
Sweet Lou knows the money is gone. And  
it ain't hard to figure who took it.

PIP  
You did take it.

TRICK  
So I could give it back!

XANDER  
Now, slow down, Trick--

TRICK  
Sweet Lou's probably out there looking  
for me right now. He knows I was  
supposed to be at the meet-up.

XANDER  
Alright, we came here looking for  
clues. Look for anything suspicious--

PIP  
In a murder factory.

XANDER  
Spread out.

They drift away in different directions.

Xander checks under a cracked hard hat. Chucks it.

Pip bunny hops over the lip of a rusted shop barrel. Nothing.

A late season BUTTERFLY flits past. Moves her eyes to...

Trick turning rubble with his foot.

She spots something stuck to the bottom of Trick's shoe.

PIP  
Wait, what's that?

TRICK  
What?

PIP  
On the bottom of your shoe.

TRICK  
I'm uh-scared to ask.

With her fingernails, Pip peels it off the sole of his shoe.

TRICK  
Don't say it's an ear. Please don't  
say it's a human ear.

Xander cocks his head.

PIP  
I... I think it's a business card.

XANDER  
For a plastic surgeon?

PIP  
I think so.

XANDER  
Our first clue!

PIP  
Our only clue.

XANDER  
But that's only half the tumble.

TRICK  
Sorry-- What?

PIP  
Why must this be more complicated? We  
call the clinic on the card and see  
who knows Sweet Lou.

XANDER  
I don't see many plant workers  
breaking bank for plastic surgery.  
Yeah, they'll know Sweet Lou.

TRICK  
Then what are we waitin' on?

XANDER  
Pip was right--

PIP  
As usual.

XANDER  
Sweet Lou isn't Mr. Big. And who says  
he doesn't keep the money and let  
Trick take the fall.

TRICK  
Like in episode three-oh-two of Junior  
Detective.

XANDER  
Exactly! And I personally don't wanna  
end up being rendering machine slurry.

They nod in agreement.

XANDER  
We need to convince Sweet Lou to give  
up Mr. Big.

TRICK  
Like in episode four-oh-four.

XANDER

Precisely. --Told you I was gonna get to interrogate someone.

TRICK

But how we gonna do that?

PIP

Wait-- What're we doin'?

XANDER

We only need to make it look like an actual interrogation. And you know who's good at that? Producers.

TRICK

Chester Chambers!

XANDER

You got it, CC from Junior Detective.

PIP

I still don't get it.

XANDER

We're gonna stage an interrogation scene and flip Sweet Lou. But we cannot -- under any circumstances -- let CC know what we're up to.

PIP

How come?

XANDER

Because I cannot -- under any circumstances -- be attached to whatever this is while I'm being considered for the lead in a feature.

#### **INT. PRODUCER OFFICES - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

Trick drags in with OZ (40) a lazy, tatted prop master wearing cat eyeglasses. She can put hands on anything and knows a workaround for everything.

TRICK

So how we strapped for a crossbow?

OZ

Does it need to fire? Cuz then ya need an armorer-- And I don't do that.

TRICK

Straight up?

OZ

Son, the key to sticking in this here business is to do as little as possible -- less liability.

(to CC)

Is this Sci-fi or Period? I can get either but I don't wanna do it twice.

They join Xander and Pip huddled with the old Junior Detective producer, Chester "CC" Chambers (40). He's a pretentious snot who's always in charge. In charge of what could be open for debate.

CC

Can I presume we have a go production?

XANDER

Why else would I be here?

CC

Dare I say it? A reunion special?

Xander throws a fake smile. Shrugs.

CC

I knew it! Tell me the budget--?

OZ

And who's got my script breakdown?

XANDER

Honestly, we're still workshopping the final script.

PIP

(snorts)

--Understatement.

TRICK

Keep sayin' we need a chase scene.

XANDER

A what?

OZ

I don't do nuthin' on wheels-- That's some other knucklehead's problem.

PIP

--If that was our only problem.

OZ

And, uh, who's this one?

PIP  
I'm Pip.

OZ  
Looks like you. She playing yer  
daughter?

XANDER  
Of course not.

OZ  
Is she yer daughter?

PIP  
Oh, gawd, no.

XANDER  
What?!

Trick stands. Paces as he free-forms.

TRICK  
Nah, check it. Pip's gonna be, like,  
the baby hacker in the script, with  
crazy mad computers skills and all.

CC  
Ah, a child prodigy paralleling Skip's  
character arc in the show. Smart.

TRICK  
Mm-hmm. I gotcha, bruh.

CC  
Is that one the writer?

XANDER  
We're not quite sure what Trick does.

OZ  
Of all of 'em, I hate her the least.

Trades smiles with Pip.

CC  
Well, forward me the latest draft and  
I'll have my scribes punch it up.

XANDER  
Oh, Oz--

Her eyes snap open.

OZ  
I was awake!

XANDER  
We're gonna need interrogation props.

OZ

Eh, car batteries, ropes, pliers?  
What's the party?

CC

--What did she say?

XANDER

Think more L.A. police department,  
less South American prison torture.

OZ

Okay, but I think yer passing on an  
opportunity here. I'll bring options.

CC

Pray tell, what exactly is going on?

PIP

(uneasy)  
It's, um, um...

Eyeballs the room for inspiration. Lands on Xander.

PIP

... Improv. Sweet Lou's helping us  
improv the interrogation scene.

TRICK

--Been sayin' the script needs work.

CC

And who is Sweet Lou?

XANDER

The money.

PIP

--Solid phrasing.

TRICK

And he really wants input.

XANDER

And, you know, we need to keep Sweet  
Lou happy so, uh, he sends back a good  
report to the other investors.

PIP

(chuckle-snorts)  
Clients.

CC

(has no idea what's happening)  
Huh... Whatever.

**INT. PRODUCER OFFICES - CC'S PRIVATE OFFICE - LATER**

A shelf chock-full of awards. Framed posters of movies and television shows adorn the walls, including Junior Detective.

Behind a computer monitor, Pip cries into the office phone.

PIP  
(in a child's voice)  
But {sniffs} But I want my dad-dy.

On the other end of the phone conversation...

**INT. MEDICAL FACILITY - LOBBY - DAY**

With her back to us, we hear the RECEPTIONIST on the phone.

RECEPTIONIST  
Oh, don't worry, sweetie.

**INT. PRODUCER OFFICES - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

CC  
Chase scenes are expensive to produce  
and insure. Please elaborate.

TRICK  
(to Xander)  
I'm totally feelin' a getaway driver.

A thought crowns in Xander's head.

CC  
Oh, do not utter that man's name out  
loud.

XANDER  
Boy, he'd have to be, like, a hundred.

CC  
He is way too aggressive, uninsurable  
and did I mention he is insane?

XANDER  
Sounds like one of us already.

TRICK  
Eh, who we circlin' around?

CC  
Showtime: The stunt car driver from  
Junior Detective.

XANDER  
 (fingers steepled)  
 Oh, please, CC. Oh, please-- Oh,  
 please-- Oh, please-- Oh, please.

Pip struts in.

Plops on the edge of the conference room table.

PIP  
 I found Sweet Lou.

CC  
 I didn't realize he was lost.

XANDER  
 And Mr. Big?

### **PIP'S IMAGINATION**

Swinging like a hammer, a hulking Neanderthal, Sweet Lou rolls into a medical clinic and past a BUSTY RECEPTIONIST. She turns and waves. She has NO FACE.

In the back hallway, Sweet Lou passes surgeons, patients and staff who have no faces. They all recognize Sweet Lou.

PIP (V.O.)  
 Sweet Lou works atta clinic with five different owners. So he's the only one who can tell us who Mr. Big is.

CC (V.O.)  
 --Is this a different investor?

PIP (V.O.)  
 But he has a tincy, little problem with talkin' over the phone, so he wants to meet in a quiet little bar...

On the phone, Sweet Lou mouths the words, "quiet little bar."

### **BACK TO SCENE**

Pip hops off her perch on the table.

PIP  
 ... So, dur, I'm out.

Eyelids closed, Oz cocks her head in CC's direction.

OZ  
 Uh, sounds like a "you problem," not a "me problem."

CC nods.

XANDER  
Trick'll do it.

TRICK  
Me?!

XANDER  
He knows you, Trick, and he knows you  
have the bag.

CC  
--If this is an investor, I should be  
in this meeting.

TRICK  
But I can't flip him.

XANDER  
Trust me, you won't. Just get him back  
to my place. Oz'll bring the props--  
I'll take it from there.

A bead of sweat rolls down Trick's forehead.

PIP  
Wait, why aren't you going?

XANDER  
I got a therapy session at, like, now  
o'clock. And I don't miss those for  
anything-- Especially this week.

PIP  
Jeez, that poor therapist.

Crosses herself.

XANDER  
He'll do fine.

TRICK  
(sweating freely)  
What if he don't wanna go?

XANDER  
My gawd, man, you're sweating like a  
pig. How can one, single human person  
sweat this much?

TRICK  
Cuz I got eyes and ears.

XANDER  
Just play it like the Junior Detective  
interrogation scene we talked about.

TRICK  
(resigned)  
Episode four-oh-four.

CC  
Oz, you procure the props, Trick, you  
get Sweet Lou and we'll all rendezvous  
back at Xander's abode.

CC raps his knuckles on the table...

CC  
This is gonna be top-drawer.

Everyone stands.

Covertly, Pip slides the flash drive to Xander.

PIP  
(aside)  
And I found out what's on this. We  
seriously gotta talk.

Xander files that card for later.

Hangs an arm on Trick.

XANDER  
The guy's name's Sweet Lou. He sounds  
like a total pussycat.

TRICK  
(to Oz)  
So where'd we land on the whole  
crossbow situation?

**EXT. PRODUCER OFFICES - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER**

As they walk to Xander's late-model ELECTRIC SEDAN...

XANDER  
So what's the lowdown on the drive?

PIP  
More rich-people shit.

XANDER  
(impatient)  
Uh-huh.

PIP  
A wallet with thousands in crypto.

XANDER  
What's that in real money?

PIP  
Tens of millions of dollars.

Xander goes numb. Forgets to blink.

**INT. XANDER'S ELECTRIC SEDAN - CONTINUOUS**

As they climb inside, Xander catches up to the moment.

XANDER  
Hold the phone, that's not, like,  
drachmas or rubles or something.

Slide the flash drive into his pocket.

PIP  
If Mr. Big finds us with that drive,  
it's game over.

XANDER  
Well, lookee who's gotta lotta shares  
for his therapist today.

PIP  
Oh, I'm sure yer always circled on  
their calendar in red.

**INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - DAY**

An overanxious patient, VERNON (35) peeks over the top of a travel magazine. Raises the magazine over his eyes.

Wary, Xander side-eyes Vernon.

On the far side of the waiting room, Pip sits beside Xander.

They speak in hushed tones.

XANDER  
Good job back there, by the by.

PIP  
A new personal best for the number of  
lies I've told in a single day.

XANDER

It's the romantic in me, but I'd like to think I'm somehow responsible.

PIP

You're joking, right?

His phone chirps.

TEXT MESSAGE -- "TIMPANI: Dinner with investors set for tonight. You in?"

XANDER

Shit.

Vernon stretches. Steals a sideways gander at Xander.

Xander hides his face.

XANDER

Oh, shit.

PIP

Double shits?

XANDER

I think I've been spotted. Sit casual.

PIP

How do you... what?

XANDER

This is the whole reason I hate going out in public. First, he's gonna want an autograph and then a selfie, and then, and then I'm sure humiliation will be part of the process.

PIP

Oh my gawd, stop spiraling. I would give my tits to attract that kinda attention. Well, future tits. I'm not totally sure how generous that whole situation's gonna be. But right now I'm a ten-year-old girl-- Goldfish attract more heat than me.

XANDER

--Oh, shit here he comes.

VERNON

(points)

Busted!

Xander cringes.

VERNON

Something, something Harris, right?  
Scooter on Junior Detective.

XANDER

Sorry, you're mistaken.

VERNON

Huh. Well, damn, you sure look a lot  
like him, friend. Anyone ever tell you  
that? But older.

PIP

Older?

VERNON

(chuckles)

Like, waaaay old. But, hey man, aren't  
we all?

Xander points to his phone as it buzzes.

XANDER

(creeps away)

I'm sorry, but I have to...

VERNON

Is that really him?

PIP

Ask him for a selfie when he comes  
back. He loves that.

VERNON

I knew it!

**INT. A TRENDY SPEAKEASY - THE VARNISH BAR - SAME**

Sweet Lou stews. Glances at his watch.

**INT. BUILDING CORRIDOR - DAY**

On the phone...

XANDER

Well-well-well, Blair Thomas O'Neal.  
And what do I owe the honor?

**INT. BLAIR'S LUXURY SEDAN - SLOW TRAFFIC - DAY**

BLAIR THOMAS O'NEAL (30) drives with his son GRAYSON (10).

BLAIR

Xander, ol' buddy. It's been a minute.  
But, hey, I've been thinking about ya.

XANDER (V.O.)

Yeah?

BLAIR

And I'm thinking I might have a job  
for you -- if you're interested.

# INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

Xander leaps up and down. Pumps a fist. Composes himself.

XANDER

Yeah, well, I'm, like, super busy  
right now-- Lots of balls in the air.

BLAIR

Oh, yeah? Well, hell, good for you,  
man. Sorry I bothered you--

XANDER

Oh, no-no-no. Ha-ha. Some of those  
balls, you know, might be up there  
for... quite a while-- you get how it  
is. Well, maybe not you. You probably  
just beckon a ball and it gently  
floats down into your hand.

BLAIR

Did I mention L.A.'s Finest is going  
into syndication next year?

XANDER

(becomes sad)

I... I did not know that. But, yeah,  
I'm glad to see one of us had such a  
great career. Every Friday when I turn  
on the TV and... there you are...  
Blair. Doing great.

BLAIR

Yeah, well, thanks, buddy. Now, lemme  
tell you all about this role I have in  
mind.

XANDER

Just one thing, I don't do the Officer  
Skip thing anymore. I have moved on.

BLAIR

(chortles)

Oh, no, nothing like that.

XANDER

Great, just send me the sides and dates and my agent will do the rest.

BLAIR

Xander, I don't think you understand.

Xander listens intently.

BLAIR

You know my son, Grayson.

XANDER

No, I don't think so. No, not really.

BLAIR

Well, we gotta have you over to the house real soon-- He's a great kid.

GRAYSON

Pay attention to the road, Dad. Gawd.

BLAIR

I was thinking of you as, more like, a mentor. You know, showing him the ropes -- that kinda thing.

Xander's face crumples.

XANDER

Yeah, yeah, I got it. Yeah, more like a role model thing, keeping the little fella outta trouble.

BLAIR

You got it. He's got his own series now. A real chip off the ol' block-- That's gonna be announced real soon.

XANDER

His own series...

BLAIR

You know, he's a child star. We were child stars. It's just I don't have the time with my series. Do you have any idea how much money everyone makes in syndication? Of course, you do. The pressure on me to deliver is unreal.

# **INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - DAY**

Pip and a short-fused and unorthodox therapist, Dominique "DOM" Einhardt (60) are locked into a staring contest.

The blood-shot eyes of Dom behind her half-frame glasses.

The clear and devious eyes of Pip.

Both ladies determined to win.

Dom blinks.

Pip erupts.

Dom growls.

Pip nabs her prize -- a heaping handful of Halloween candy out of a bowl on the receptionist's desk.

Broken by his previous phone call, Xander shuffles into Dom's office. He doesn't react as she cuffs the back of his head.

DOM  
(slight German accent)  
Welcome back, loser.

PIP  
He's an actor, so, obviously, he's a pathological liar.

DOM  
(to Xander - meaning Pip)  
I like this one.

#### **DOM'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER**

Dom paces behind Xander, seated in a chair.

DOM  
(calm)  
Is that like Bitcoin?

XANDER  
Uh, kinda--

DOM  
I don't take Bitcoin.

XANDER  
You're not getting it.

DOM  
(incredulous)  
And you're dodging the issue. Again--

She cuffs the back of his head.

XANDER

No one thinks I can act anymore,  
that's the issue.

DOM

Well, can you?

XANDER

What?

DOM

Act?

XANDER

Dom, I'm having a meltdown!

DOM

Well, snap out of it--

She cuffs the back of his head.

XANDER

You would not believe the humiliating  
conversation I just had with Blair  
Thomas O'Neal.

DOM

Okay, now, BTO. That's a good actor.

XANDER

Don't you think I'm a good actor?

DOM

Helloo! You're a terrible actor. And  
the issue is that you won't confront  
your past.

XANDER

I'm paying full freight for this?

DOM

Nein! You're paying me for reality.  
You're a has-been.

She cuffs the back of his head.

DOM

Do the math. Take the investor  
meeting, get the part.

XANDER

(whines)

But I don't wanna take the meeting.

DOM  
Are we done man-baby-whining?

XANDER  
I think so... It's just, I'm sick of feeling like this all the time. --I'm sorry, I guess there was still a little bit more down there.

DOM  
Xander, this might be your last chance--

XANDER  
At being a serious actor?

DOM  
At coming to grips with your past.

Xander squirms.

DOM  
Hmm. What about the other thing?

XANDER  
What other thing?

DOM  
The other thing. The only thing.  
They're both the same thing! Do not  
make me pull out the Raggedy Ann doll.

XANDER  
You know I hate that game.

She yanks a tattered RAGGEDY ANN DOLL out of a drawer.

Xander drops his head.

DOM  
True or false?

XANDER  
--When you punch her in her cute little face, it, it makes me sad.

DOM  
True or false?

XANDER  
Okay, okay, you win. I'll play.

DOM  
True or false, I hate my parents.

XANDER

You or me? I don't understand.

DOM

You, you idiot. You.

XANDER

I just don't want you to punch little Raggedy Ann. Well, no. I do not hate my parents. I love them very, very much and I'd appreciate you not bringing up my parents all the time.

DOM

Why?

XANDER

Why, what?

DOM

Why don't you like talking about your parents?

XANDER

(excited)

See, now this is good. This is more like a normal therapy session.

DOM

Because you don't wanna be reminded of their death? True or false?

XANDER

I thought we agree to stop bringing up my parents.

DOM

You agreed. I don't have rules.

XANDER

Well, I think there should be some rules. I have rules. Why shouldn't you have rules too? It's only fair.

DOM

True or false: You want the world to stop seeing you as Officer Skip because it reminds you they died while you were still on the show.

XANDER

False--

DOM

Lie!

Dom slugs Raggedy Ann in the face--

XANDER  
No, don't do that. She's just a doll.

DOM  
You peaked in grade school.

XANDER  
False--

DOM  
Lie!

Raggedy Ann takes another to the kisser.

Xander flinches.

DOM  
Until you walk into that counselor's  
office and face the reason why you're  
still pissed off at your parents--

XANDER  
I'm not pissed off at my parents.

Dom viciously PUMMELS Raggedy Ann.

XANDER  
(calm)  
Now, that's just uncalled for.

DOM  
Until you can walk into that office  
and face the reason why you're still  
pissed off at your parents, then  
you're never going to embrace the most  
successful part of your career and  
move forward with your life.

XANDER  
They want me to do selfies at the  
investor dinner tonight.

DOM  
Sounds like you got a lot of shit to  
do before dinner. True or false?

Fires Raggedy Ann at him.

XANDER  
(pleads)  
But I got this case--

DOM  
It's not a case!

XANDER  
We got clues and everything.

DOM  
And you're not a detective! And if you say Bitcoin one more time, I'm gonna walk over there--

XANDER  
You know why I can't go in that room. It's where they told me about the accident.

Her face tightens.

XANDER  
And I have a photographic memory-- You know that too. So I remember every last detail, never dulled by time. I can tell you every last item on the desk--

DOM  
(mocking)  
I can tell you how the office smelled that very day. Yada-yada.

She cuffs the back of his head.

DOM  
I've heard that damn sad-sack story so many times I can repeat it by heart. That's it. That's enough. I'm done.

XANDER  
No, Dom. I'm begging you.

DOM  
Get out!

XANDER  
Don't drop me. We're making progress.

DOM  
Oh, you're not getting off that easy.

Xander swallows hard.

DOM  
I'm gonna make you confront your past.

XANDER

But, Dom--

She cuffs the back of his head.

They leave together.

**INT. A TRENDY SPEAKEASY - THE VARNISH BAR - SAME**

Dad-mad and hockey-mom drunk, Sweet Lou sips a beer.

As Trick enters...

TRICK

What up, my dude?

Happy-go-lucky, Trick sits. Drums his fingers on the table.

TRICK

Sweet Lou, right?

**EXT. DOWNTOWN L.A. STREET - SIDEWALK - DAY**

In a daisy chain of hands, Dom drags Xander into a crowd of people. Xander drags Pip. They stop. Instantly, everyone recognizes Xander. A titter. People approach.

DOM

Accept who you are, Xander.

XANDER

Dom, please.

Phone cameras snap photos.

A voice calls out "That is him."

He's swarmed by a dozen people. The buzz grows.

Startled, Xander's swept away.

Dom stands stoic. Obscured by frenzied fans.

DOM (V.O.)

Confront your past!

Faces. Motion. A couple dozen people now.

It's a blur to Xander.

He loses Pip's hand.

Confused, Xander looks at his hand.

PIP (V.O.)

Xander?

Xander claws through a pressing crowd.

Catches friction.

Determined, Xander knifes between bodies.

Emerges from the mob of fans with Pip in tow--

Finds someone's shoulder. HARD. Almost knocks them down.

Their gaze meets--

It's RIO in a POLICE OFFICER'S UNIFORM.

Both linger for a moment. Don't recognize each other.

Once more, a tide of fans washes over them.

Rio melts into the crowd.

Xander and Pip hustle into a nearby building.

**INT. A TRENDY SPEAKEASY - THE VARNISH BAR - SAME**

Trick peruses the Halloween drink menu.

SWEET LOU

(groggy)

Yeah, you... Where's the--?

Face-first, Sweet Lou drops into the table.

Calm, Trick turns for a waitress.

TRICK

Yo! Check.

**EXT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - DAY**

Orange traffic cones line the entrance.

Xander's sedan and a large green dumpster parked inside.

**INT. XANDER'S ELECTRIC SEDAN - DAY**

Xander stares at the ceiling. Pip waits beside him.

PIP

Are you gonna be okay?

XANDER

Eh, just doom-scrolling the events of the day in my mind.

PIP

I mean are you gonna be okay until, y'know, the others show up?

XANDER

Why? Is your mom here?

Xander scans the vacant parking lot.

PIP

Nah, it's cool. She told me to, like, meet her here, so you can leave--

XANDER

I can stay.

PIP

What I'm saying is, you don't have to.

XANDER

I know. It's not a problem.

PIP

Uh, I'll be fine.

XANDER

Then we'll be fine together.

PIP

You don't date much, do you?

XANDER

What? And give up all of this?

Motions to Buchanan Elementary.

PIP

Us women give off certain signals when we want to be alone.

XANDER

Most just tell me there's no way I'm dating a guy who lives in a school.

Hardly past its prime, a world-weary ACURA parks near the dumpster. The car overflowing with boxes and clothing.

Pip checks behind her.

XANDER

(snide)

Looks like someone's living out of it.

Pip isn't smiling. Turns back to Xander.

He realizes the truth. Knows her secret.

Rustling inside the dumpster, the top of a woman's head.

Unable to hide her eyes pooling tears, Pip looks away.

Gently, Xander lays his hand on hers.

--She snaps her hand away. Humiliated.

PIP

Well, I gotta go--

XANDER

Pip.

Only pausing for a moment, she leaves.

MOM (35) crawls over the dumpster lip. Drops to her feet.

Pip hustles to the Acura.

On the fence line of tragedy, Xander processes more information than he can handle.

Taillights of the Acura blink. They drive away.

Xander's alone.

#### **INT. ACURA - DAY**

Pip's Mom stares straight ahead as she drives.

PIP

There's, um, sumthin' ya should know.

#### **INT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MAIN OFFICE - DAY**

We follow Xander as he steps to the Counselor's Office door.

He touches the key. Reverent. Caresses it.

He eases back. Rubs his arm. Dilated pupils fix on the door.

For an instant, he becomes a LITTLE BOY (10).

The school bell RINGS. Piercing.

Echoes through every brick in the building.

Changed back to ADULT XANDER, his face brightens with a tinge of sadness. Forces a smile.

The entire office FLASHES white.

Xander turns to a window with a view of the parking lot.

Trick flashes his high beams. More cars park behind him.

Xander starts for the door.

**INT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY**

Pip's Mom prairie dogs around lockers.

Checks if the coast is clear.

Leads Pip by the hand.

They land at one specific locker.

On the far side of the hall, Xander rounds the corner. Stops.

Clearly sees Pip's Mom stealing the bag of money.

Frozen, Pip stares at Xander.

He eases back around the corner. Steals a moment.

Checks the thumb drive in his pocket.

Xander's lip curls into a smile as he walks away.

**EXT. INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT - LATER**

A village of ramshackle RVs line a derelict street. Society's disposable and forlorn rummage through clutter and debris.

Pip's Mom climbs out of the Acura. A breeze tousles her hair.

Inside, Pip slides the bank bag under her seat.

Through the car window, she spies a nursing TEENAGE MOTHER in a folding chair on the sidewalk. Dark circles under her eyes.

The NEWBORN wrapped in a threadbare blanket.

Pip considers the two of them. Bites her thumb.

**EXT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - DAY**

Inside Trick's CROWN VIC, Sweet Lou sits crumpled and utterly boneless on the passenger seat. He's bigger than most things a cowboy would saddle up and ride around on.

Perplexed, Xander, Trick, CC and Oz stare into the car.

The new face... that's the stunt car driver from Junior Detective CC warned about, SHOWTIME (90). He's African-American and a paranoid wildcard who acts out of fear.

XANDER

Great! How'm I gonna interrogate him now? The man's unconscious. And how the hell'd you get him in there?

SHOWTIME

'At's one very large human being.

TRICK

Holler at me later 'bout all that.

XANDER

Did he mention Mr. Big?

TRICK

Not a real talker when he was coherent. A goddamn chatterbox when he was incoherent.

XANDER

And how'd he get like that?

Everyone turns to Trick...

OZ

(motions to Trick)

--I gave him a shit ton of roofies.

CC

(scoffs)

The date-rape drug?

OZ

I didn't have any crossbows in inventory.

CC

So you procured dangerous pharmaceuticals?

OZ

Yeah, about that, Trick. I'm gonna, like, need the rest of my pills back.

TRICK

Oh, yeah. Sure. Really?

XANDER

Obviously, you don't wanna hang on to a highly illegal date-rape drug.

TRICK

No, of course not. You don't think... I would... to a woman.

XANDER

Right, so hand 'em over.

TRICK

Like, right now?

XANDER

Yes, right now. All of them -- before they get us into even more trouble.

TRICK

Okay, just one small question -- and I mean a very small question. I was for sure that was, like, one single dose.

OZ

Oh. Shit.

XANDER

Oh, God. I'm going to prison.

CC

Is that man deceased?

XANDER

Hold on. Hold on. He's kind of a, you know, a big guy. Are we absolutely sure he's dead-dead?

CC checks for a pulse.

Sweet Lou's lifeless arm flops out of the car.

In unison, everyone steps back. Gasps.

XANDER

Okay, Sweet Lou's worm food.

CC

No one panic. We're all creative professionals. We should brainstorm.

TRICK

Glitter.

CC

What about glitter?

TRICK

Glitter makes everything better.

OZ

Nuh-uh. No glitter. It gets everywhere and I ain't cleaning that shit up.

CC

The first rule of brainstorming is to not reject ideas out of hand, but no.

XANDER

Showtime, you've been ominously quiet. What'd you think?

SHOWTIME

I dunno whadda think. You idiots won't stop talking.

XANDER

Oh, I'm very sure we'll all get our shot at holding the idiot stick.

SHOWTIME

Well, I know one thing for sure. I'm about ta be the only black man when the cops arrive. And there ain't no shoving that shit back in the pig.

Brandishes his PIECE -- a Colt six-shot revolver.

TRICK

Whoa, whoa, whoa. Who turned everything up to infinity?

OZ

I ain't done a lotta investor meetings but this is insane.

CC

I've done plenty and this is nothing.

XANDER

I know murder-suicide flashed across everyone's screen for a minute there. But Showtime, I am on your side.

TRICK

Oh, shit, there's sides?

Sweet Lou's head tips. He moans.

Relieved, everyone sags.

XANDER

Oh, thank God. See there-- The man's hardly dead at all. Showtime, put that thing away.

Showtime shoves the pistol back into his belt.

As they walk to a maintenance shed...

CC

But I still can't fathom why he's drugged if this is all improv.

XANDER

The man's very method. In the scene, we're interrogating a perp who's on a lotta drugs, so Sweet Lou wanted to be in, like, the same state of mind. We just have a, uh slight dosage issue.

CC

(doubtful)

Uh-huh. And what about the neighbors?

Checks over both shoulders.

Trick rolls out a WHEELBARROW.

XANDER

Oh, the neighbors have seen way worse stuff than unconscious men being carted inside. Hey, everyone! Spit out your gum and if you're cutting through the gym, no dress shoes.

# **INT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY**

Determined, Xander marches across checkerboard flooring.

XANDER

Joelle?

JOELLE

Yes, Xander, dear?

XANDER

Play interrogation music.

Mounted on the wall, a public address speaker vibrates.

MUSIC CUE: "Secret Agent Man" by The Dickies.

**MONTAGE: SLOW-MOTION INTERROGATION PREP**

GYM: Trick wheels Sweet Lou across the basketball court.

HALLWAY: Oz schleps bags of props past CC on the phone.

WALK-IN CLOSET: Xander considers his wardrobe options.

BOILER ROOM: Showtime zip ties Sweet Lou to a chair.

HALLWAY: Xander struts around the corner in a GIMP SUIT.

**INT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - BOILER ROOM - DAY**

Sickly green walls. Weeping stains. Industrial pipes. An instrument panel with gauges and a large steampunk boiler.

It's dark. The only thing throwing light, a naked bulb dangling from an extension cord.

Motionless, Sweet Lou is tied to a chair with a BURLAP HOOD over his head.

Across a table: crime scene photos, a burning cigarette in an ashtray, brass knuckles, a length of rubber hose and an egg beater.

Trick, CC, Oz and Showtime turn...

CC  
What the...?

... As Xander enters in his gimp suit.

Xander poses. Confident.

SHOWTIME  
I was told this wasn't no porno. I  
checked this time.

Xander's body deflates the instant he spots Sweet Lou.

MUSIC CUE ABRUPTLY ENDS

Xander rips off his own mask.

XANDER  
(disappointed)  
Why's he got a hood on?

OZ  
Calm down, I brought options.

Points to fingers.

OZ

We got a blindfold, cowl, veil, sack,  
bucket or ol' reliable, duct tape.

XANDER

But then he can't see how terrifying I  
am because he can't see me. I changed  
specifically to be terrifying.

PIP (O.S.)

That ain't terrifying...

Everyone turns to Pip propped in the doorway.

PIP

... That's just weird.

XANDER

Surprised to see you again.

PIP

Can't let you dumdums have all the  
fun.

OZ

Uh, I dunno, I'd say it's kinda hot.

CC

I always thought you were a lesbian.

OZ

Hmmph, why does everyone assume that?

XANDER

And why the cigarettes?

SHOWTIME

To burn holes in his hands.

XANDER

No. No burning holes in people. I'm  
not sure everyone here understands the  
assignment.

SHOWTIME

Eh, how ya gettin' 'em to talk?

PIP

Like, do questions.

SHOWTIME

Damn, but y'all suck at torture.

XANDER

No! No torture. We are not torturers.

CC

Hot question: Should we roll on this?

Everyone digs for a phone. Pauses.

XANDER

Absolutely not. We don't want evidence  
this ever happened. Put those away.

TRICK

Actually, the smokes are mine.

XANDER

Is this you not quitting again?

TRICK

But, ya see, I don't, like, inhale, so  
it don't count.

Lifts the cigarette to his lips.

A low growl from under the burlap hood...

SWEET LOU

You're all gonna die.

The cigarette tumbles out of Trick's mouth.

TRICK

Oh-ho. Now, that's terrifying.

CC

Why didn't someone say he was this  
good?

XANDER

(creeps closer)

Oh, Mr. Lou? Or should I call him  
Sweet? No, that sounds off. Sweetie?

Everyone shakes their head at Xander.

Sweet Lou's head slumps forward again, unconscious.

XANDER

Dang, it! Trick, can I have a minute?

### **A QUIET CORNER**

Xander and Trick huddle.

TRICK

This is going great.

XANDER

This is going horrible.

TRICK

No-no-no. You're confusing the word horrible with the word great.

XANDER

Stop talking--

TRICK

Okay, but I do believe you're making a mistake, yo.

XANDER

Listen. There's a lotta money on the flash drive. So if we don't get the name of Sweet Lou's boss, like, tout suite, we're all in deep doo-doo.

TRICK

Cool. So what I hear you sayin' is torture's back on the menu.

XANDER

Will everyone stop saying the word torture? We are not torturing.

TRICK

Okay, well, let's hip-pocket that shit in case we need to pull it out later.

CC joins them.

CC

Gentlemen, can I get the sides?

XANDER

I specifically said we are improv-ing this scene, so there is no script.

TRICK

(to CC)

Uh, yeah. That sounds like a no, bruh.

CC

You will eventually need to show me a script. Weak scripts are the reason these reunion shows go so poorly.

Oz and Pip join them.

OZ

I wouldn't mind a second opinion. I'm kinda feeling the duct tape, now.

XANDER

Obviously, we came over here to have a private conversation.

PIP

Well, maybe we can help. Hashtag DUH.

TRICK

(arms folded)

Ya know, Xans, rather than, like, all hands every situation, maybe you can just see we all tryin' to make the dopest joint possible.

Everyone nods.

TRICK

I believe in ya, bruh. And I'm not ashamed to holler that shit in front uh everyone.

XANDER

Well, I believe in all of you too.

(to Trick)

Wait, why would you be ashamed of saying that in front of anyone? Unless, of course, you're still questioning my acting abilities.

TRICK

Questioning?

Xander simmers. Regroups.

XANDER

Okay, um. Ideas on how to do a scene when your co-star isn't conscious? Go!

CC

We wait for him to wake up--

XANDER

No time.

PIP

Then we wake him up--

XANDER

Obviously, but how?

Grinning to all hell, Showtime palms a red DODGEBALL.

XANDER

Absolutely not.

TRICK  
 (overlapping)  
 Oh, no, no, no. Okay--

Showtime ROCKETS the ball across the room.

XANDER  
 You gotta be kidding me.

BLAMO! The ball HAMMERS Sweet Lou's head. Doesn't wake him.

They rejoin Showtime and Sweet Lou.

XANDER  
 Ah, the man's already suffered  
 irreversible brain damage from the  
 drugs. Smashing his coconut like that  
 is just gonna make it worse, and leave  
 marks we can't explain away later.

Sweet Lou sputters to life. Groggy.

Aggressively, Trick rubs Xander's shoulders.

TRICK  
 Episode four-oh-four-- Now, get in  
 there, bruh.

CC  
 And, action!

Semi-conscious, Sweet Lou's head bobs.

Xander circles.

XANDER  
 (overacting)  
 Okay, buddy, we found the money. You  
 know the drill. Start talking.

Heavy breathing from under the hood.

Barely hanging on to reality...

SWEET LOU  
 You... you shmucks have no idea who  
 yer dealing with.

XANDER  
 Who's your boss? Who you work for?

SWEET LOU  
 It's been escalated.

XANDER

Escalated? What the hell does that mean? Escalated to who? Talk man. Who?

TRICK

(whispers to Oz)

Have the egg beater on standby.

Confidently, Oz nods.

SWEET LOU

A hired killer... a cannibal.

XANDER

I'm sorry, what now?

SWEET LOU

(head bobs)

Wheels in motion.

XANDER

Wait, a hired killer and a cannibal or a hired killer that is a cannibal? How many scary things are we dealing with?

SWEET LOU

(laughs)

You're all gonna die.

Sweet Lou's head falls forward. He's out again.

Mind blown, Xander surveys the room.

Jaws drop.

Trick vibrates as his circuits fry.

CC

(peels away to make a call)

This script is fantastic.

SHOWTIME

'Scuse me--

XANDER

No, wait!

Xander steps in front of Showtime.

Discombobulated, Trick crowds close.

TRICK

Xans, I never got at cha 'bout this but I have nightmares about being squashed by a giant wheel.

(MORE)

TRICK (cont'd)  
Did you hear, yo? Wheels are in motion. Multiple wheels.

SHOWTIME  
Out my way, kid--

Xander dances to block Showtime's escape. The two of them have more moves than a TikTok meme.

XANDER  
Now, hold on, a minute. We need to go to the police.

SHOWTIME  
On purpose?

XANDER  
He's talking professional hitmen. We need professional protection. I got this whole other thing going on so I can't leave. And if I can't leave, you can't leave. And as I covered, I can't leave! So unless you have a better idea.

Showtime opens his mouth to speak--

XANDER  
One that doesn't involve a felony.

Showtime closes his mouth.

XANDER  
Screw finding Mr. Big. Next location, the police department.

His hand over the phone, CC pokes his head between them.

CC  
Oo, I have a contact there.

OZ  
So's this a wrap?

XANDER  
Wrap!

Showtime manhandles Xander into...

## **A QUIET CORNER**

SHOWTIME  
Dunno what y'all are up to, but I ain't stupid. This ain't no movie.

XANDER

Of course, it's not. But now you're,  
like, you know, an accessory.

SHOWTIME

What?

PIP

(yells across the room)  
Hey, grown-ups--

XANDER

(yells back)  
Gimme a minute.

SHOWTIME

Kid, what cha got me mixed up in?

XANDER

Look, just keep it together -- I know  
you're good for it -- and I'll find  
you a place in my other movie.

SHOWTIME

What other movie?

XANDER

The real one.

Showtime ponders for a microsecond.

SHOWTIME

Done worse for less.

Onion-eyed, Trick's paralyzed with fear.

Xander and Showtime rejoin the gang.

OZ

(motions to Sweet Lou and Trick)  
I ain't loading out anything that  
ain't prop-related.

PIP

So whadda we do now?

SHOWTIME

There's only one thing to do here.  
Luckily, I'm awesome at it.

XANDER

Wait, what are you gonna do?

SHOWTIME

Take care of the body.

XANDER

Body? There is no body. No one's dead.

SHOWTIME

If anyone asks, lets go with that.  
Last time we saw him, he was alive.

XANDER

No, let us be clear. There is no body  
to be "taken care of."

SHOWTIME

Stop asking questions-- I'm fixin'  
this.

**EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY**

Showtime's cherry 1969 GTO roars through town.

**EXT. PORT OF LOS ANGELES - DAY**

The GTO crawls to a stop. Showtime hops out. Engine still idling. Rushes around to the passenger door.

Inside, Sweet Lou lies still. Hooded.

Showtime grapples with his titanic body, unable to drag him or even move him.

**I/E SHOWTIME'S 1969 GTO - MOMENTS LATER**

Behind the wheel, Showtime ponders.

A faint moan. Sweet Lou's coming around.

Slowly, Showtime turns his head.

Sweet Lou wakes up angry. THRASHES. With his hands still bound, Sweet Lou rips off his hood.

SEES SHOWTIME

The old stunt car driver thinks fast.

Hits the gas--

Jerks the steering wheel--

The GTO spins hard. The car WHIPS around--

And Sweet Lou sails out the open passenger door.

Lands HARD on the ground.

Tires smoke. The GTO fishtails away.

Sweet Lou sits up. Pissed.

# **FULL SCREEN**

An amateur VIDEO CHEF (20s) addresses the camera.

VIDEO CHEF  
This is absolutely, guaranteed, the  
easiest way to spatchcock a chicken.

# **INT. RIO'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY**

A WHOLE RAW CHICKEN sits on a cutting board.

Rio watches the video on a tablet.

VIDEO CHEF (V.O.)  
Kiddies and kittens, that's just a  
fancypants way of saying we're  
preparing the bird so it cooks super  
even and turns out super yummy.

Rio whirls his wrist, begging the chef to go faster.

VIDEO CHEF (V.O.)  
Now, you're gonna need these tools: A  
sharp paring knife...

Confident, Rio opens a PELICAN CASE filled with an assortment  
of murderous knives.

VIDEO CHEF (V.O.)  
... And a pair of poultry shears. It's  
very important they are poultry  
shears, also super sharp. Using the  
right tool makes all the difference.

Panicked, Rio rifles through drawers.

Digs out a pair of BARBER SHEARS.

Eh, looks close enough.

Carving with a PARING KNIFE, Rio struggles to stay up.

VIDEO CHEF (V.O.)  
First, turn the chicken breast side  
down. Starting at the neck end, make  
two lengthwise cuts, like this, along  
the backbone -- one on each side.

Rio's in trouble. Cuts too shallow.

## VIDEO CHEF

Save the backbone for stock -- that's a whole other video. Next, open up the chicken like so, like opening a book.

Rio can't remove the backbone.

Wrestles with the bird, trying to fold it.

Falls behind. Frustrated, he restarts the video.

Questioning his choices, Rio abandons the knife for shears.

Tries again. Thwarted again.

Then a single bone. SNAPS. Success! He's thrilled.

Until he realizes he's hopelessly behind the video again.

SCREAMS!

Rio snatches a CLEAVER out of the Pelican case.

Assaults the bird.

Hacked parts fly everywhere.

Wipes his hands on his apron.

Yells at the bird.

RIO

Hijo de puta!

**INT. POLICE STATION - LOBBY - DAY**

In uniform, EDDIE (40) a condescending desk sergeant spots Xander, Trick, Pip, CC and Oz approaching.

Playing it safe, Showtime observes from a distance.

XANDER

I need to talk to a cop.

EDDIE

And now I feel like I got all dressed up for nothing.

CC

--We are here to see Lainey.

EDDIE

Officer Coogan?

CC  
She is expecting us.

EDDIE  
(over his shoulder)  
Hey, Coogs!  
(laughs at Xander)  
Thought you wanted a real cop.

XANDER  
(to Trick)  
See, I told you every good episode had  
a some grizzled, old veteran yelling  
at us about breaking all the rules.

Miss America beautiful, Officer LAINEY COOGAN works through  
the bullpen in a uniform that hugs.

XANDER  
(to Trick)  
Well, this is definitely a plot twist.  
But hey, that's just good writing.

All the men sparkle for Lainey as she passes. She's a soft 30  
and as sweet as county fair cotton candy or the first lick of  
a peppermint stick.

SHOWTIME  
'At's one attractive woman.

TRICK  
Filthy.

CC  
Don't even try it, boys.

PIP  
What part of her ain't you looking at?

CC  
Lainey has been pushing dorks like you  
off of her since she's been in skirts.

OZ  
I think I might be a lesbian.

Confidence personified, Lainey mugs up CC.

LAINEY  
Heya, CC.

CC  
Why hello, Lainey.

TRICK

--Yes.

LAINY

Yes to what, dear?

TRICK

Yes to whatever you want.

LAINY

Oh, we already know that.

XANDER

I apologize. He was broken when we found him and confident for no apparent reason.

CC

Is there someplace more appropriate we can carry on our conversation?

LAINY

Sure thing.

They tail her through the bullpen.

XANDER

Did you just try and land that?

TRICK

I, like, totally landed that shit.

#### **CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

The group gathers around a conference room table with Lainey.

CC

I could get you a small part.

LAINY

I'm pretty much an action hero already.

CC

Of course you are. Everyone, this is Lainey Coogan, the Public Information Officer and she is obviously amazing.

LAINY

They can see that--

CC

Her father was an institution here.

XANDER

Hold it, we specifically asked for a real cop.

LAINY

Oh, but I am a real cop. They gave me, like, a badge and a gun and everything.

(to CC)

They have no idea who they're dealing with, do they?

TRICK

Ah, bruh, I think she just told you to step off.

XANDER

Yeah, I got that the first time.

OZ

(meaning herself)

Art department slash production designer. I'm not with these midwits.

LAINY

(to everyone)

I'm sure you're all very impressed, but please, call me Lainy.

CC

And this is--

XANDER

Oh, no-no. No names.

CC

What?

XANDER

No names. Like, the less she knows about me, the better.

PIP

Can you get any weirder?

LAINY

Aren't you Xander Joe Harrison?

XANDER

Dammit.

TRICK

Xans is spittin' truth--

SHOWTIME

Yeah, these walls have ears.

(yells at the walls)

And for the record, none 'this was my idea.

TRICK

If I've learned anything from watching, like, every episode of Junior Detective -- multiple times -- there be snitches everywhere and all the cops are on the take. Present company excluded, of course. This girl be way too lit to ever do me dirty.

CC

--We would love your permission to shoot a Junior Detective reunion show at one of the stations.

LAINY

Yeah-yeah, you said that on the phone, but what in the ho-lee cheese balls are these Muppets talking about?

CC

I find it less tedious to ignore them when they get like this.

TRICK

Xans, I feel like she's pretty squared away. I think we might need to get her up to speed on the whole, you know, wheel situation.

LAINY

And I'm picking-up zero percent of what this one's laying down.

TRICK

Giant wheels.

XANDER

CC and Oz, can we have the room?

CC

Hmmph, this is my meeting.

Oz steals an extra peek at Lainy before leaving.

CC relents.

Showtime's paranoia grows.

XANDER

Okay, I'm not saying another word. You guys explain.

(to Lainey)

I'm up for a major feature so I can't get involved in any of this.

LAINY

Eh, will someone explain?

TRICK

Should I start with the cannibals or whaddya think?

XANDER

Whatever you want. I'm just gonna sit here, quietly.

Lainey's not tracking any of this.

TRICK

Okay, so first off there's some cannibals and killers and, and then, of course, there's Sweet Lou--

XANDER

No, stop, Trick. Stop. That's a terrible open. Very confusing.

PIP

What happened to sitting quietly?

XANDER

I believe this is one professional killer who is a cannibal.

TRICK

--The number of cannibals is unknowable.

XANDER

I'm not saying another word.

SHOWTIME

And the last time we saw the body, he was still alive. But that's all I'm sayin' without a grip of lawyers.

Excited, she might have an actual case...

LAINY

A possible one-eight-seven?

TRICK

No, a body.

LAINY  
Whose body?

TRICK  
Sweet Lou's body.

LAINY  
And who's Sweet Lou?

XANDER  
May I?

LAINY  
Please, do.

XANDER  
(to Trick and Showtime)  
You two are making a mess of this.  
(to Lainy)  
We were interrogating Sweet Lou --  
interrogating, mind you, not torturing  
-- to find out the name of his boss.

LAINY  
Why?

TRICK  
Awww, that be such a good question.  
You fire and smart.

LAINY  
(turns to Xander)  
Why?

Xander zippers his mouth shut.

Lainy rolls her eyes.

PIP  
So we can give back the cash hidden in  
the school.

Xander shoots Pip a look.

PIP  
--May or may not be hidden in the  
school.

SHOWTIME  
'At's right-- We admit nuthin'.

LAINY  
What school?

TRICK

The elementary school where he lives.

LAINY

He, who?

XANDER

(after a beat... explodes)

Me, okay, me. I live at Buchanan Elementary School.

LAINY

Again, why?

XANDER

Why do I live in an elementary school or why is the cash hidden there?

LAINY

Oh, I'm sure mental illness is involved in both answers.

TRICK

To hide it from the plastic surgeons.

SHOWTIME

--I dunno nuthin' about that part.

XANDER

And the millions in crypto.

TRICK

Millions?! Bruh, you never said it was, like, millions. Damn.

Lainy lights up.

LAINY

Wait? Is this part of the script?

TRICK

No, this be f'real-life crazy shit.

LAINY

No, you guys are gassing me up.

XANDER

We were attempting to find Mr. Big--

TRICK

And bodies were, like, everywhere.

LAINY

Sweet Lou's body?

SHOWTIME

That man was alive last I saw him.

LAINY

And where'd you last see him?

SHOWTIME

Flyin' out my car.

LAINY

(laughs)

Okay. CC put you up to this, right?

XANDER

An actual hitman is coming for us--

TRICK

Who may, or may not be, a cannibal.

LAINY

CC, get in here!

XANDER

I need protection.

SHOWTIME

We need protection.

XANDER

I need protection.

LAINY

(stands)

I gotta get ready. We're having a Halloween costume party tonight.

CC and Oz return.

LAINY

Good one, CC, but I saw right through it.

CC

Saw right through what?

LAINY

Send me dates when you're ready to shoot, and the script sounds bonkers.

CC

(to Xander)

A-ha! I knew you had a script.

LAINY

You guys are weird. This'll be fun.

As Lainey walks out...

TRICK  
I don't remember an episode like this.

XANDER  
We gotta leave town.

**INT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY**

Xander panic packs. Scrambles around his spacious bedroom, the entire top floor. Pleads with Timpani on the phone.

XANDER  
Okay, I help you and you help me.

**INT. TIMPANI'S OFFICE - DAY**

TIMPANI  
Deal.

INTERCUT THE PHONE CONVERSATION

XANDER  
I'll do the investor meeting...

TIMPANI  
--That's great, Xander.

XANDER  
... As long as I'm not dead.

TIMPANI  
Why would you be dead?

XANDER  
Odds-on favorite would be Oz or CC  
after they find out I've been lying  
the whole time.

Stares at the flash drive.

XANDER  
But don't rule out the assassin.

TIMPANI  
The what?

XANDER  
Look, tell the investors I'll do  
whatever they want. But in the  
meantime, book me on something.  
(MORE)

XANDER (cont'd)  
I'll do anything, overseas, anything,  
as long as it's shooting, like, right  
now, and shooting somewhere, not here.

TIMPANI  
(aside to an off-cam assistant)  
This is what my life has become.  
(to Xander)  
I'm not sure that's totally realistic.

XANDER  
No one's shooting anything, anywhere  
on planet Earth?!

TIMPANI  
Just keep in mind, the investors still  
need to okay you first--

XANDER  
And we're shooting that one outta town  
too. Wait, what? Uh-uh. If I do the  
meeting, I get the part.

TIMPANI  
Agreed. If the meeting goes well --  
and we both know it will -- then it's  
highly likely you'll get the part.

XANDER  
No! That is not the deal. Does no one  
think I can act anymore?!

His smart speaker lights up. Pink.

JOELLE  
Oh, face it. You were never that good.

XANDER  
Of course, I was. Am. Whatever.

JOELLE  
Stop lying to yourself, Xander.

XANDER  
Again, not helping!

TIMPANI  
(aside to an off-cam assistant)  
He's totally off the rails this time.

JOELLE  
Have you ever watched an episode of  
the show? It's simply amazing what you  
can talk yourself into believing is  
real. Your sister, for example.

Xander drops the phone.

XANDER  
How do you know about my sister?

**FULL SCREEN**

The SHOW OPEN of Junior Detective plays with theme music.

**INT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - LIBRARY - DAY**

A box set of the complete Junior Detective series on DVD.

Xander studies his awkward acting on the monitor.

JOELLE  
Oh, dear, those did not age well.

His face says Joelle is right.

XANDER  
Did you catch Trick in the background?

JOELLE  
I did.

XANDER  
He's been a good friend.

JOELLE  
But he does not tell you the truth. He says things like--

XANDER  
Those were really great scripts.

JOELLE  
He is kind of a dum dum.

Resigned to his own mediocrity, Xander turns off the monitor.

XANDER  
Joelle.

JOELLE  
Yes, Xander.

XANDER  
I have absolutely no time for this...  
but call Dom.

**HALLWAY**

Lost in his thoughts, Xander wanders.

For an instant, dozens of children rush past him.

A YOUNG GIRL (11) stops. Curious, she considers us. Bites her thumb. Rushes after the others.

The school bell RINGS.

The children are gone.

Xander's alone.

#### **COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - FLASHBACK**

Xander's a LITTLE BOY again and he's furious. The bustle and hush of an elementary school right outside the door.

YOUNG XANDER

Whaddaya mean, they're not coming?

Hands clasped, a COUNSELOR (50) sits behind his desk.

COUNSELOR

Xander, your parents were in an accident.

YOUNG XANDER

No, they're just late. They're always late.

COUNSELOR

Xander...

#### **END FLASHBACK**

#### **COUNSELOR'S OFFICE**

As calm as a Buddha, DOM sits in the Counselor's chair.

DOM

Xander your parents died in that accident, rushing to pick you up.

ADULT XANDER sits opposite Dom.

DOM

Your sister too.

XANDER

It was an audition. They were trying to get me to another stupid audition for another stupid show-- I don't even remember the name of it. I never blamed 'em for abandoning me.

DOM

That's what you think? Your parents abandoned you?

XANDER

Wait, why you suddenly being so nice?

DOM

Why are you suddenly doing everything I've been begging you to do?

XANDER

Commanding me--

DOM

Suggesting. With emphasis.

XANDER

(scoffs)

But why was she part of the deal? She wasn't even supposed to be in the car that day. She was home, sick--

DOM

Your sister?

#### **HALLWAY - FLASHBACK**

Xander's sister, KIT (11) is the Young Girl we met moments ago. Curious, she considers us. Bites her thumb. Rushes away.

XANDER (V.O.)

I see her face everywhere.

DOM (V.O.)

It's okay to cry.

#### **BACK TO SCENE**

XANDER

I'm not crying.

DOM

I might.

Mounted on the wall, a public address speaker plays the Junior Detective theme song.

XANDER

Oh, Joelle, I am so not in the mood.

DOM

Who are you talking to?

XANDER

It's just the smart speaker.

The nickel drops for Dom. More like a quarter.

XANDER

Joelle, music off.

DOM

Xander, there is no music playing--

The theme song stops.

XANDER

Well, yeah, now.

DOM

I was just in your office and, uh, the smart speaker isn't hooked up. I noticed it was still in the box.

A lot there for both of them to chew on.

DOM

Xander, tell me about your sister.

XANDER

I, uh. Well, her name wasn't Joelle if that's where you're going.

DOM

No, Xander Joe Harrison.

XANDER

Kit. Her name is Kit. She, uh. She's my older sister -- a year older. I got skipped a grade, see, so, I was in her class.

DOM

--At school--

XANDER

Yeah. I was, like, kinda small for my age. And when the other kids pushed me around, she, um, she stood up for me.

DOM

And this is where Kit's alive for you.

XANDER

Yeah.

DOM

At school--

XANDER

She always stood up for people.

DOM

Sounds like she could handle herself.  
Remind you of anyone we know?

XANDER

You?

DOM

(shakes her head)  
Huh. It's right in front of you.

XANDER

I don't wanna talk about Kit anymore.

DOM

Okay, sure. I know you don't see it,  
but let's talk about Pip.

Xander struggles to his feet. Walks out. The door open.

#### **HALLWAY**

Slowly, Xander walks alone.

JOELLE

Xander. Oh, Xander.

DIP TO BLACK:

#### **INT. WAREHOUSE COOKING FACILITY - DAY**

Behind a long row of prep stations, COOKING STUDENTS stare straight ahead as if it's a drill sergeant inspection.

JAPANESE CHEF (V.O.)

(slight Japanese accent)  
You! You want to know secrets of the  
Soba noodles?

A tiny JAPANESE CHEF (40) confronts a student. Rio.

JAPANESE CHEF

But are you worthy to know secrets of  
the Soba noodles?  
(grunts)  
Roll dough like I show to you.

The tyrant instructor parades past each student as they work buckwheat dough with extra-wide rolling pins.

JAPANESE CHEF

Too much water.

Moves to the next student.

JAPANESE CHEF

Too much flour.

Moves to the next student.

JAPANESE CHEF

Yes. That looks, yes.

STUDENT

How much longer should I keep rolling?

JAPANESE CHEF

Longer than now.

Moves to the next student.

JAPANESE CHEF

Terrible.

Moves to the next student.

JAPANESE CHEF

Unacceptable!

Stops at Rio.

Oblivious, Rio peels dough off his rolling pin.

Feels the weight of the instructor's stare--

Hides the rolling pin behind his back.

Beet-faced the Japanese Chef glares at Rio.

SLAMS his ROLLING PIN on the countertop.

Students WINCE.

Intimidated, Rio flings the rolling pin away.

JAPANESE CHEF

(paces)

Now, cut into strips. Only use  
traditional Soba noodle knife.

In unison, students raise traditional SOBA NOODLE KNIVES.

Rio palms a CLEAVER.

The Japanese Chef slaps the cleaver out of Rio's hand.

JAPANESE CHEF

No!

After a momentary tête-à-tête...

They both turn to the cleaver on the floor...

Then back to each other.

JAPANESE CHEF

Bring shame to entire class.

RIO

Pick it up or I will do this.

JAPANESE CHEF

Unworthy to know Soba noodles.

RIO

Excusa...

Rio swats down. Disappears behind the prep station.

The Japanese Chef slams his rolling pin on the countertop.

JAPANESE CHEF

No! No! No! No!

Startled, the students ease away.

Rio pops up with a HECKLER & KOCH USP SEMI-AUTOMATIC.

Terrified, the Japanese Chef freezes.

Terrified, students freeze.

Rio's phone dings.

He raises his index finger.

Checks the phone.

TEXT MESSAGE -- "PASHA: What are you waiting for?"

Rio steps back. Considers. Nods.

A single shot RINGS OUT.

The students SCATTER.

..... THUD.

Rio places his phone on the countertop.

Shoots it.

Walks away.

**INT. POLICE STATION - LOBBY - DAY**

Lainey glides past the front desk sergeant.

EDDIE

Late lunch?

Her boyfriend, MOISHE (30) lopes in. Tips his cowboy hat. He's gangly with a large nose and frizzy hair.

LAINY

Don't wait up.

EDDIE

Aw, come on, whaddya see in that guy?

Moishe pecks her cheek.

She coils around her boyfriend's arm.

LAINY

Well, I dunno, he's a good kisser, makes me laugh and he's smarter than Google. All things you are not.

MOISHE

Hey, babe, before I forget, I just got a flash alert for L.A. county.

**INT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - LIBRARY - DAY**

At the window, Trick searches for approaching threats.

Undaunted, Xander finishes packing while Showtime reveals their diabolical ruse to CC and Oz.

SHOWTIME

... And so this reunion show malarkey he's been shoveling is total rhubarb.

XANDER

But what he's failing to mention is that my life might be in mortal danger. Most likely, yours too.

CC

No, this cannot be happening.

OZ

I'm still invoicing somebody.

TRICK

Damn, but I can't help but think some of this is, like, somehow my fault.

XANDER

(stops packing)

Whaddaya mean, think? This is totally your fault.

Pockets the flash drive.

TRICK

My fault?

XANDER

Wow, I really hope you're not trying to pin any part of this on me.

TRICK

Whatever, man, apology accepted.

XANDER

I did not apologize. If anyone should--

The door BURSTS open. Lainey tumbles into a forward roll.

Dressed in a latex Catwoman costume and bulletproof vest, she strikes a superhero pose with her PISTOL drawn.

LAINY

Down! Down! Get away from the windows!

Everyone backs up.

On Lainey's tail are Officers HILL (20s) and WEST (20s). Both sweep their weapons from side to side.

Hill is Caucasian and dressed like a PEPPER SHAKER. West is African American and dressed like a SALT SHAKER.

XANDER

Lainey... And you brought fun friends.

LAINY

(relaxes)

Oh, yeah, them. See, the office party was about to get started--

Takes the teensiest step-- Stumbles.

LAINY

--I meant to do that.

XANDER

So do you finally believe me or just  
come over to hate on my windows?

LAINY

(back in cop-mode)

Oh, yeah, after you left -- CC, I sent  
you, like, a thousand messages.

Surprised, CC fishes for his phone.

LAINY

(to Xander)

You were so totally right.

XANDER

Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't catch that.

(senses everyone staring)

What? Yes, I'm an extremely petty man--  
I admit it. In fact, my only regret is  
that Pip's not here to not enjoy  
hearing those words.

SHOWTIME

Wait, where is Pip?

XANDER

I dropped her at home-- In her car.  
Whatever.

LAINY

Well, if she's smart, she's long gone.

# **INT. RIO'S APARTMENT - SAME**

In white slacks and a T-shirt, Rio assembles a GLOCK 17.

Opens his Pelican case of knives.

LAINY (V.O.)

The Georgian mob's top assassin has  
been activated.

CC (V.O.)

This cannot be happening.

XANDER (V.O.)

Wait. How do you know all that?

# **BACK TO SCENE**

LAINY

I look fabulous and know things.

TRICK

That does seem to be her deal.

LAINY

And I believe we've already covered my awesomeness.

TRICK

I mean, is it just me or is she really pulling off that vest?

Patiently, Xander waits for the other stiletto to drop.

LAINY

Oh, all right, I'm dating someone at the F.B.I.

XANDER

I told you I was about to be murdered--  
I cannot be murdered right now. I'm up  
for the lead in a major motion  
picture!

CC

This can't be happening. The reunion  
show is really canceled?

XANDER

Aaaaand, back to my impending murder.

LAINY

The Georgian boss is named Koka  
"Pasha" Pashvili.

XANDER

--The one Sweet Lou wouldn't give up.

TRICK

--Nah, hard boy works for the doctors.

LAINY

And Pasha keeps plastic surgeons on  
payroll just in case they need to  
disappear fast. And wouldn't you know  
it, Pasha's about to be indicted.

OZ

I demand to be taken into yer personal  
protective custody.

Holds out her wrists to be cuffed.

Trick holds out his wrists too.

TRICK  
Get in line, sister.

An idea bolts into Xander's head.

XANDER  
Hey, wait. What if we just gave the  
money back?

LAINY  
Eh, I'm sorry, but when did we all  
agree to start saying terrible ideas?

XANDER  
No, really. This is what they actually  
want.

Pulls the flash drive out of his pocket.

XANDER  
We give it back and ask the surgeons  
to call off the assassin. That was the  
original plan.

TRICK  
Well, ya know I'm down ta clown.

XANDER  
No way, they know you, Trick. They'd  
kill you on sight.

SHOWTIME  
I'm up for it.

OZ  
No, Showtime.

Turns to Xander. Unsaid: You should do it.

He gulps. Rebuilds his confidence.

XANDER  
You're right.

Turns to Lainey.

XANDER  
Law enforcement should handle this.

SHOWTIME  
We won't abandon ya, kid.

CC  
Honestly, Xander, who would ever shoot  
Officer Skip?

XANDER  
 (to Lainey)  
 Could be a chance for both of us to  
 finally do some badass cop shit--

Lainey presses her index finger to his lips.

LAINERY  
 Oh, you had me at "badass."

XANDER  
 Well, this should be entertaining.  
 Dammit, gimme a vest.

SHOWTIME  
 I'm drivin'.

TRICK  
 I knew we needed a getaway car.

High-fives Showtime.

CC  
 Good gracious, we are not insured for  
 any of this.

LAINERY  
 Okay, now, people... I am in charge of  
 this operation at all times. Let's  
 roll! Everyone outside!

Xander and Trick start for the door--

TRICK  
 No, wait. Xans, you gotta say it,  
 bruh.

Half-hearted, Xander shakes him off.

TRICK  
 You gotta say it.

XANDER  
 (points)  
Busted!

Everyone claps, whoops and smiles at his catchphrase.

**INT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - BOYS RESTROOM - DAY**

A sneaker presses down on a shiny metal bar.

Water sprays from a ring of jets.

Trick soaps his hands inside a communal sink.

Reacts to a FLUSH from the GIRLS RESTROOM next door.

Who is that if everyone is outside?

# **MOMENTS LATER - OUTSIDE THE GIRLS RESTROOM**

Arms folded, Xander and Trick wait in the hall.

Pip walks out with the bank bag. Looks up. A sober moment.

PIP  
(humble to Trick)  
Hey, before ya get all judgy, I wasn't  
stealing it. I was bringin' it back.

She walks the bank bag into Xander's hands.

XANDER  
But I wanted you to have it.

Off Pip's contrite face...

# **HALLWAY - FLASHBACK**

... Pip's Mom prairie dogs around the corner.

Checks if the coast is clear.

Leads Pip by the hand.

PIP (V.O.)  
Yeah, that money coulda been a second  
chance for me and my mom-- a lotta  
other families too.

# **MAIN OFFICE**

Pip steps behind the receptionist's desk.

PIP (V.O.)  
--Y'know for a photographic memory,  
your locker combinations are a joke.

On a surveillance monitor, Xander puts the bag in a locker.

PIP (V.O.)  
But we all know some really bad people  
are gonna come looking for that money.

# **BACK TO SCENE**

PIP  
And. And there's little kids-- Littler  
than me. I can't do that to 'em.

Her face falls.

XANDER  
So you were standing up for others.

PIP  
Yeah, I guess so.

Parroting back Dom's words...

XANDER  
(sotto)  
It's right in front of you.

PIP  
Who is?

XANDER  
Why'd you do it?

PIP  
I just told you--

XANDER  
No, why didn't you come back?

PIP  
I... I brought the money back-- That's  
gotta count for sumthin'.

XANDER  
You left me here, all alone here.

PIP  
We aren't, uh, talkin' about me  
anymore, are we?

XANDER  
(snaps out of it)  
No. You're not really her.

Dips his head.

XANDER  
I know that. It's just more lies.

PIP  
Huh, come on, Xander-- You dunno shit  
about lies. I mean... yeah. Try living  
a lie every day. Try hiding who you  
are-- Where you live. How you live.  
I'm nothing but lies.

XANDER  
It's okay to cry.

PIP  
(tears threatening)  
I'm not crying.

XANDER  
I might.

Xander recognizes a familiar pain in her eyes.

PIP  
... Lying all the time.

Lets herself fall hard against a metal locker, slide to the floor and cry herself ugly.

Questions scratching, Trick isn't sure how to help.

XANDER  
(squats)  
Hold on, now. You know what that sounds like to me? That's an actor.

That sparks something in Pip.

XANDER  
You're gonna be a great actor.

PIP  
(sniffs)  
What a bunch of crap. How would you know great acting?

A smile shines up all three faces.

XANDER  
Hollywood's clearly given up on me.

TRICK  
You be trippin', bruh.

XANDER  
And you now have my full attention.

TRICK  
You, like, gave up on them. You ain't never really fought for it, Xander.

That sparks something in Xander.

TRICK  
Ya gotta hug on dem fools 'fore they ever gonna grab ya back.

They sit with that thought for a moment.

XANDER

We ain't hiding from anything anymore.

Pip offers the tiniest smiling nod.

Xander offers his hand. Lifts Pip to her feet.

PIP

Y'know, when I was with you guys, I  
felt like I was part uh sumthin'.

XANDER

Because you are.

They fall into a warm hug.

PIP

I mean, even though you two are really  
crummy detectives.

XANDER

Well, we detected you, didn't we?

Trick swells with emotion. Steps close to join the hug.

Pip stiff-arms Trick away.

XANDER

And now all we gotta do is return the  
money without being murdered to death.

#### **MOMENTS LATER**

A pair of hands HIT the metal crashbar on the door.

#### **EXT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - NIGHT**

Clutching the bank bag, Xander storms out of the school.

Timpani joins him as they march to the curb.

TIMPANI

Ugh, brilliant time to turn off your  
phone she says ironically.

XANDER

Not now, Timpani. If I don't get this  
money back to the--

A thought stops him cold.

XANDER

Oh, shit, the investors.

TIMPANI

Shit is right. I've stalled them as long as I can. They're waiting.

Trick and Pip join Lainey, CC, Oz and Showtime at the curb.

Timpani pecks digits on her phone.

TIMPANI

(meaning the others)

I dunno what this is, but if you're not at that restaurant with bells on, in no-minutes flat, you can kiss your so-called career too-da-loo. Who are you? I thought you wanted this?

Into the phone...

TIMPANI

Yeah-yeah, I found him. We're parking-- Tell 'em to sit tight.

(to Xander)

So unless this is life or death...

Xander's attention sweeps from Timpani to his friends.

From his friends to Timpani.

From Timpani to Pip.

Off of Xander's tortured face--

#### **EXT. CITY STREETS - MOMENTS LATER**

A PATROL CRUISER SCREAMS through light traffic.

Lainey's RED AUDI CABRIOLET keeps pace.

Followed by Showtime's GTO.

XANDER (V.O.)

No, look, we can do both.

#### **INT. LAINEY'S CABRIOLET - NIGHT**

Still in her costume and bulletproof vest, Lainey drives. Xander shotgun. Trick and Pip dodge flak from the backseat.

XANDER

The doctors and Georgian mob aren't going anywhere--

LAINY  
And the assassin?

XANDER  
I just need a little more time to  
handle this other crisis.

LAINY  
Yeah, I'm not sure we all got the  
whole "I'm in charge" thing.

XANDER  
Technically, I had this crisis before  
the other crisis. I can't believe I'm  
actually stack-ranking my crises now.

LAINY  
So, what is it?

XANDER  
It's a way of ordering things so that--

LAINY  
The other crisis, damn.

PIP  
--His career.

LAINY  
His career? What about my career? I  
finally get my shot at busting some  
serious baddies...

TRICK  
She's right. No episode ever ended  
until you popped the bad guy, Xander.

LAINY  
... And now that I'm this close, I'm  
being usurped by Officer Skip of  
Junior Detective.

XANDER  
Ah, I get it, now, daddy issues.

LAINY  
Please.

XANDER  
Inadequacy issues?

LAINY  
Me, inadequate? How?

TRICK

Don't see it, bruh.

LAINY

Don't try and psychoanalyze me.

PIP

Hey, dumdums... She wants the respect of her peers so everyone stops thinking of her as just a made-for-TV-pretty-face.

Lainey fades from resentment to impressed.

Xander can't miss the parallels with his own life.

LAINY

And, um, why'd we decide to bring a minor with us?

PIP

It is a rather pretty face, though.

LAINY

Of course it is, dear. She can stay.

XANDER

Lainey, you are in charge.

LAINY

You making unilateral decisions is not how "in charge" works--

TRICK

Hey, yo, this is it.

As they pull to the curb...

Xander slips Pip the bank bag.

XANDER

Hang on to this, Kit-- Pip.

PIP

Who?

XANDER

I mean, Pip. But do not let anyone near it-- Promise?

PIP

You can trust me. And that's forever.

Squeezes the bank bag tight.

Xander shoots her a wink.

XANDER  
(to Trick)  
I'm gonna go fight for it.

TRICK  
Whaddaya want me to do?

XANDER  
Uh, just hang tight. I won't be that long-- I hope. A few selfies, witty anecdotes... Piece of cake, right?

TRICK  
--Would murder for a drag, right now.

XANDER  
And, uh, do whatever Lainey here says.

LAINY  
Because I'm totally in charge--

XANDER  
One hundred percent...

As Xander climbs out...

XANDER  
... As long as I'm not here.

LAINY  
That's not how it works.

**EXT. SHOWTIME'S 1969 GTO - CONTINUOUS**

Parked in front of the FIREFLY RESTAURANT, Xander squats next to Timpani in the passenger seat. CC and Oz in the back.

XANDER  
This won't take long.

TIMPANI  
It takes as long as it takes, Xander.

Showtime spots Hill and West in a parked police cruiser.

SHOWTIME  
So, how long would ya say?

CC  
Go ahead, we will make do out here.

OZ  
You look nice, Xander.

TIMPANI  
You look marvelous. Now, go!

OZ  
--Take as long as you want.

TIMPANI  
(mistakes Oz for a man)  
--See, he agrees.

OZ  
Unrelated, I hit O.T. in a half-hour.

CC  
Xander, I could make myself available  
if you need me in this meeting.

TIMPANI  
He'll be fine-- You'll be fine.

XANDER  
Now, wait, that's an interesting idea.

TIMPANI  
No, there's no time for interesting  
ideas. There's only time for "go!"

# **INT. A SWANKY RESTAURANT - FIREFLY - NIGHT**

A determined movie producer, BASTION CHEVELLE (50) jogs to greet Xander.

BASTION  
There's our superstar.

In an exaggerated bear hug, Bastion whispers...

BASTION  
Do not screw this up for me. I've got  
a fortune of my own money invested.

Leads Xander to a table of deadpan men -- THE INVESTORS.

XANDER  
Who wants a selfie?!

Like someone flipped a switch, the investors turn into excited schoolboys: whooping and yelling.

**SERIES OF SHOTS: XANDER THROWS HIMSELF INTO THE ROLE**

--Mugs enthusiastically for endless selfies.  
 --Signs autographs on everything he's handed.  
 --Regales the table with spicy showbiz gossip.

# **END SERIES OF SHOTS**

In high spirits, Xander stands and points to each investor...

XANDER  
 Busted! Busted! Busted! Busted! And  
 you... you're busted!

The table EXPLODES with laughter.

Xander drops into a chair next to an investor.

XANDER  
 (winded)  
 I don't think we've met.

As they shake hands, reveal...

DR. GARRETT  
 I'm Dr. Heath Garrett-- Big fan.

XANDER  
 Then, I guess you know who I am.

DR. GARRETT  
 Of course, Mr. Harrison.

XANDER  
 Oh, come on, now, call me Skip. And  
 everyone... Hey, everyone listen up. I  
 am, uh, so very late in introducing  
 some very important people I brought  
 with me tonight...

Gestures to the next table over, filled with familiar faces.

XANDER  
 My agent, Timpani, members of the  
 original series: CC, Oz and Showtime.  
 And, uh, Lainey, an actual  
 superhero...

Without the bulletproof vest, Lainey's low-cut costume momentarily lowers the volume on everything Xander says.

XANDER  
 ... My best friend Trick. And, of  
 course, we can't forget the very  
 talented actress, Miss Pip McGregor.

Glasses rise high in the air.

DR. GARRETT

Okay, here it is, as far as this table's concerned, you're in.

XANDER

Thank you. That means a lot.

DR. GARRETT

We had to meet you first-- You get it.

XANDER

Of course.

DR. GARRETT

After all, we're all just businessmen here, and it is our hard-earned money at risk. But this, this with your name on it, this movie is a no-brainer.

XANDER

Well, thank you again-- Thank all of you. And, uh, if you don't mind me asking--

DR. GARRETT

Oh, not at all.

XANDER

What line of business are you guys in?

DR. GARRETT

I'm head of one of the largest surgical clinics in Los Angeles.

XANDER

(sotto)

Mr. Big.

Faces sour like a bad cologne is wafting through the room.

XANDER

Wouldn't be plastic surgery, would it?

DR. GARRETT

We offer several elective procedures.

XANDER

We?

DR. GARRETT

As a matter of fact, everyone at this table is a plastic surgeon.

Their tanned, tucked and chemically perfected faces, nod.  
Lainey inventories those faces.

XANDER  
All of you work at the same clinic, I  
presume?

DR. GARRETT  
That's right.

XANDER  
Affordable rates?

DR. GARRETT  
If you're looking to have a little  
something done before the movie...

XANDER  
Funny, this is only the second  
scariest conversation I've had today.

DR. GARRETT  
Well, as long as we're making late  
introductions, our final investor has  
been unusually quiet tonight.

Acknowledges Pasha, seated at another table.

DR. GARRETT  
Mr. Koka Pashvili.

PASHA  
Call me, Pasha.

Lainey unsnaps. Hand over her holster.

Showtime stretches behind his back for a gun. Pauses.

XANDER  
I-- Uh. Is that a Georgian accent?

PASHA  
Berry good ear.

XANDER  
Aaaaand, we have a new winner for the  
scariest conversation today.

Xander's out of the blocks like an escaped circus monkey--  
Bastion grabs his arm before he gets anywhere.

BASTION  
(under his breath)  
Uh, where do you think you're going?

XANDER  
(under his breath)  
First thoughts, through the bathroom  
window, and then likely Argentina.

BASTION  
Pfft, get back in there.

Trick's eyes scan like sonar, searching for threats.

TRICK  
(mutters)  
Yo, pass me the bag, Pip.

PIP  
No way.

TRICK  
I ain't playin', girl. Shits about ta  
jump off.

PIP  
No one but Xander's getting this bag.  
Under the table, hands tussle for the bank bag.  
Finished eating, Pasha sets down his silverware.

PASHA  
You wait for my associate. You love  
him-- Big fella.

Cranes his neck.

PASHA  
Ah, speaking to the devil.  
From the lobby, Sweet Lou lumbers into the restaurant.  
Sweet Lou spies...  
Trick, then Showtime.  
Sees RED.  
Hands flailing, Xander rushes his table of friends.

XANDER  
(loud whisper)  
Scatter.

Showtime realizes he's been made. Wilds out.  
Scrambles over the top of the table, charging Sweet Lou--

Blindsides Lainey, knocking her to the floor--

Her pistol flies free.

Marching forward, Sweet Lou digs out a COLT AUTOMATIC.

Shielding Pip, Trick dives on top of her.

Everyone not holding a hand cannon cowers.

CLICK. CLICK.

Sweet Lou stops. Shock carved into his face.

Stunned, Showtime grinds to a halt.

As Sweet Lou collapses forward, it reveals RIO IN A WHITE  
COOK'S UNIFORM holding a suppressed SMITH & WESSON AUTOMATIC.

..... THUD.

Showtime's piece tumbles to the floor. He raises his hands.

Rio wheels to Pasha. Removes his toque blanche.

Quietly, Lainey crawls to her pistol.

Rio smiles at Pasha. His plate. Pasha.

Looking up from his plate -- reduced to sauce stains and  
garnish -- Pasha realizes he's doomed, poisoned by Rio.

The business end of Lainey's pistol tips Rio's head sideways.

LAINY

Freeze, Cookie.

Still smiling at Pasha, Rio surrenders his iron.

Pasha grabs his throat. Wheezes. Slumps into his plate, dead.

Hill and West burst through the restaurant doors.

LAINY

Anyone hurt?

XANDER

Not any more than the usual amount.

Investors rise. Their body language screams confusion.

Timpani, CC and Oz trade church hugs.

Showtime wrestles Trick off of Pip.

PIP  
Ugh, get him off me.

In the background, Lainey recites Miranda Rights.  
Pip fires a strike with the bank bag-- Xander catches it.  
Plants the bank bag into Bastion's chest.

XANDER  
We're self-funding the movie.  
Grabs Pip's hand.  
An earned kinship, Xander, Trick and Pip stride away.

**INT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - NEXT DAY**

Children in Halloween costumes rush down a hallway. Lead us to a table of bowls filled with every candy imaginable.  
Each kid rips away their mask.  
We push past a door with a frosted glass window. Thick, black letters spell out "TEACHERS LOUNGE."  
Inside we find the old space converted into a new beginning, a stylish pink apartment.  
Pip and her Mom crouch next to a hamster cage. Adore Ted Danson, munching a salty chip.  
Pip stands. Considers. Bites her thumb.

**EXT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - BASEBALL FIELD - DAY**

We follow Pip to the baseball diamond, where ten-year-old boys and girls play in street clothes and costumes.  
On deck, Xander takes a practice cut.  
Emphatically, Trick claps. An unlit stogie between his teeth.  
A base runner, Showtime cheers from third base.  
Oblivious of the game, CC and Timpani stand next to each other yakking on phones. Likely, to each other.  
Lainey and Moishe hold hands.  
Oz wears Moishe's cowboy hat.  
Cups Lainey's other hand.

Xander steps into the batter's box.

Down the sideline, Pip catches his eye.

His MOTHER (35), FATHER (35) and Kit step up behind her. They're all smiles. A butterfly flutters past.

JOELLE (V.O.)  
When you know who you really are,  
that's usually enough.

Xander blows a big pink bubble.

POP.

The catcher looks up...

CHLOE  
I thought bubble gum was bad for you.

XANDER  
It's pink, kid. Nothing pink will ever  
hurt you.

In old-timey flannels, the pitcher, Dom, fires a fastball--  
CRACK!

Xander goes yard.

In a vain attempt to keep the ball from flying over the fence, the Center Fielder throws his glove in the air.

Xander admires his handiwork while kids CHEER.

JOELLE (V.O.)  
But on occasions...

The baseball sails through the air.

JOELLE (V.O.)  
... It comes with a spicy kicker.

**INT. BLAIR'S LUXURY SEDAN - INTERSECTION - DAY**

Blair sits with his son Grayson, waiting at a red light.

The view through the windshield-- SHATTERS!

BLAIR  
What the...?

Scowls at the ballfield across the street.

**EXT. BUCHANAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - BASEBALL FIELD - DAY**

Xander cringes--

Bolts. Hands flailing.

XANDER  
Scatter! Everyone, scatter!

Utter bedlam.

Each person runs in a different direction, screaming.  
Children, adults and ghosts.

FADE OUT.